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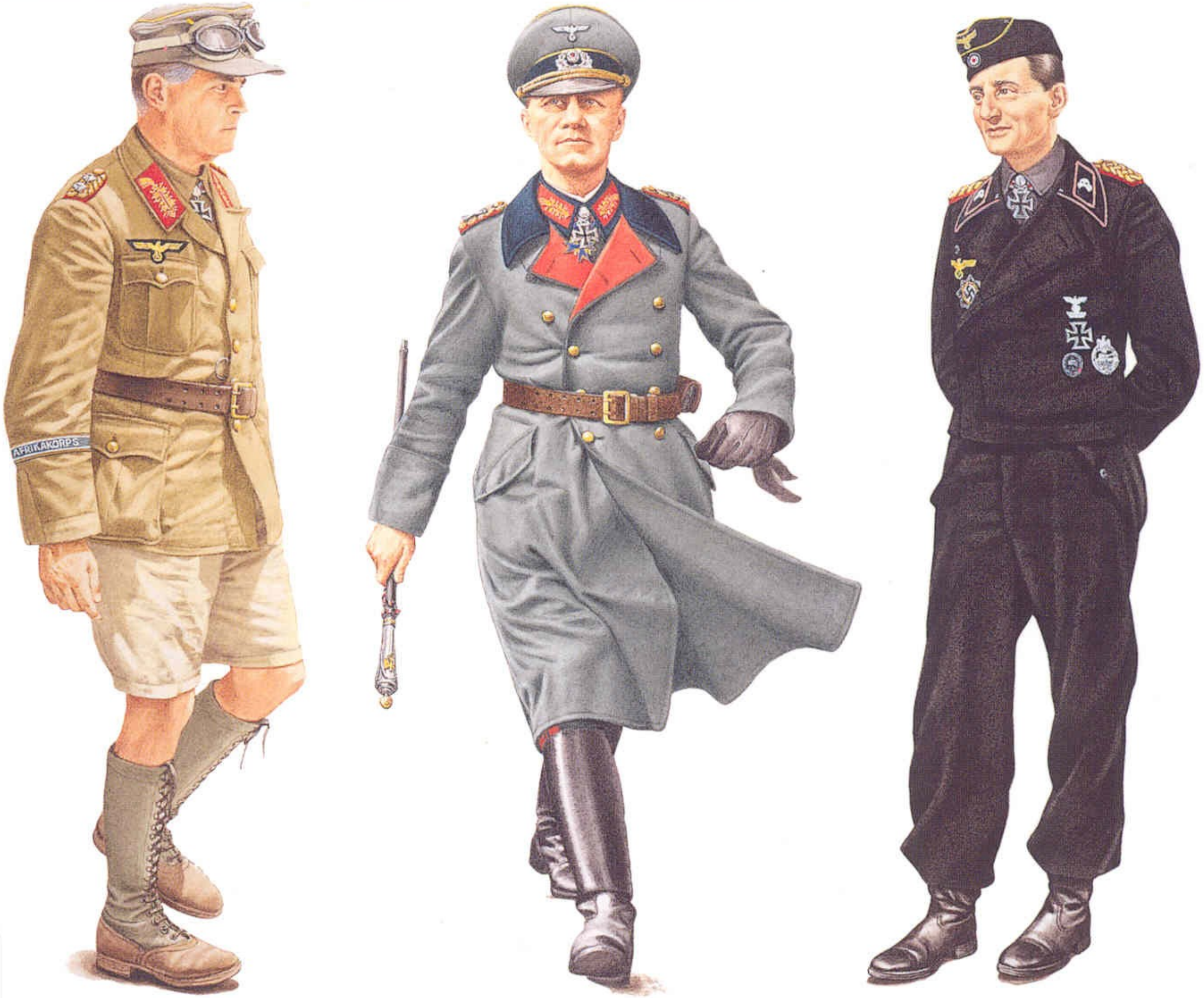
AFRIKAKORPS

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The Publishers regret that they can enter into no correspondence upon this matter.

German Army officer ranks
with abbreviations used in this text, and British (US) equivalents

Leutnant (Lt)	2nd Lieutenant
Oberleutnant (OLt)	1st Lieutenant
Hauptmann (Hptm)	Captain
Major (Maj)	Major
Oberstleutnant (ObstLt)	Lieutenant-colonel
Oberst (Obst)	Colonel
Generalmajor (GenMaj)	Major-general (2-star)
Generalleutnant (GenLt)	Lieutenant-general (3-star)
General der Infanterie, etc (Gen d.Inf)	General (4-star)
Generaloberst (GenObst)	—
Generalfeldmarschall (GFM)	Field marshal (5-star)

OPPOSITE **In 1938 Hitler ensured his grip over the officer corps by promoting the undistinguished but obedient General der Artillerie Wilhelm Keitel to Generaloberst and appointing him Chief-of-Staff of Combined Services at Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW). An unintelligent bureaucrat with no experience of senior command, he was a pliable 'yes-man' for his Führer, who described him as having the brains of a cinema doorman. As the professional head of the armed services he did little to support field commanders plagued by Hitler's unrealistic orders. He also signed without question a wide range of documents, some of which took him to the gallows after the Nuremberg trials.**

GERMAN COMMANDERS OF WORLD WAR II (1) THE ARMY

INTRODUCTION

THE NAMES SELECTED for inclusion in this book are purposely diverse. As well as the famous field marshals and army commanders, whose names it would seem perverse to omit, we have included a number of divisional commanders; and also officers of more modest rank whose accomplishments were nonetheless impressive, and who stand as representatives of the mass of combat unit commanders. Their order of arrangement in this book is more or less according to the level of command in which they became most renowned.

The subject of the professional quality – or lack of it – found among the senior German military leadership in World War II could be argued *ad nauseam*. The Wehrmacht's rapid victories in 1939–41, and stubborn defensive fighting in 1944–45, created a conventional wisdom that perhaps tended to over-value the German officer corps without discrimination. Equally, some post-war studies have questioned the 'star qualities' of many of the most famous German commanders, suggesting that their abilities have been overrated (though it must be said that the same claims have been made, and disputed, in respect of many Allied commanders).

In reality, of course, none of the senior German commanders were superhuman, and all had failings of some sort and to some degree. Many of the most senior commanders were aristocrats, born into families with centuries-long histories of military service. Many of them despised Hitler and the Nazis as gutter demagogues; and yet they acquiesced with many of the Nazi policies when these seemed to be bringing national and military success. The moral code of their class involved a real sense of duty and obligation, particularly since they had sworn a personal oath of allegiance to the head of state by name; the repulsion they felt towards any sign of disloyalty overcame any moral repugnance they may have felt towards the Nazis' behaviour in power.

Some were strictly non-political professional soldiers, whose qualities earned them the loyalty, even the devotion of their officers and men. Erwin Rommel was the best known of these; and Julius Ringel was christened 'Papa' by his troops – a nickname that history proves is only ever given to the most genuinely popular commanders. Some, like Dietl, Model and Schörner, were convinced and dedicated Nazis; yet they were undoubtedly brave and skilful soldiers, who also attracted loyalty, even when – as in the case of Model – they did not flinch from accepting high casualties. Even some of these Nazi 'believers' were among the German generals who earned the grudging respect of their enemies.

Other senior commanders, such as Rundstedt, were generally regarded at the time, even by their enemies, as among the best that Germany possessed; yet in retrospect their achievements seem far less impressive. Despite Rundstedt's personal contempt for Hitler, he was unbending in his adherence to the old Junker code, and was prepared to sit on the 'court of honour' which stripped many officers suspected of complicity in the July 1944 bomb plot of their military rank, in preparation for their torture and execution.

Among the commanders included here are attacking generals like Guderian – known to his men as 'fast Heinz' – who excelled in the energetic and audacious tactics of the Blitzkrieg; and others, like Model – the 'Führer's fireman' – who were supremely able commanders in defensive situations.

It has often been suggested that the German generals were in the main first class commanders, and that their military failures were due to the constant interference by Hitler in decisions that were beyond his competence. While such interference is well documented, it must also be accepted that in some situations Hitler was proved right. There are also examples of senior commanders who had the courage to stand up to Hitler when they believed that his orders were totally wrong, or who simply ignored such orders and did what they felt best. None was ever executed for such rank disobedience; the worst that normally happened was that they were dismissed from their commands, and even then most were later recalled to duty.

It is hoped that the selection of officers in this book will provide the reader with a range of examples covering many of the most significant field commanders, ranging through a variety of character types from the most energetic and innovative to the cautious traditionalists, and from the convinced Nazis to those whom even their enemies considered models of Prussian chivalry.

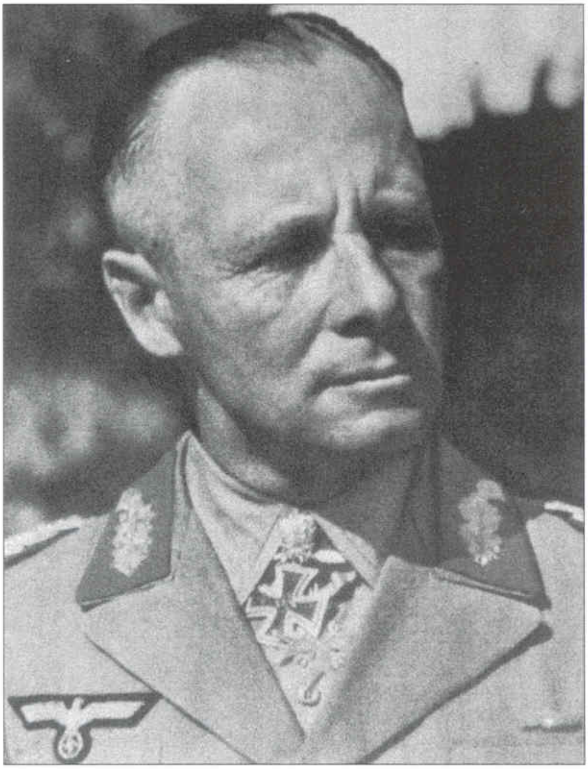
ARMY GROUP COMMANDERS

Generalfeldmarschall Erwin Rommel (Plate A2)

Probably Germany's most famous soldier, who gained the devotion of his own troops and the respect of his enemies, Erwin Johannes Eugen Rommel was a Swabian, born at Heidenheim near Ulm in Württemberg on 15 November 1891. The son of a bourgeois schoolteacher, Rommel had no advantages of social rank or military forebears. In 1910 he joined Infanterie Regiment 124 (Württembergisches), and two years later he was commissioned Leutnant from the Danzig military school.

Rommel served throughout World War I with considerable distinction. After being wounded on the Western Front he transferred in October 1915 to the new Württemberg Mountain Battalion, with which he served in the Carpathians and, in 1917, on the Italian front. There he earned the coveted Pour le Mérite for spectacular success in the capture of Monte Matajur during the 12th Battle of the Isonzo (Caporetto) in December 1917. By the end of the war in November 1918 he had risen to the rank of Hauptmann in a staff appointment.

Captain Rommel was retained by the 100,000-man army of the Weimar Republic, the Reichswehr. In 1929 he was posted to the Kriegsschule at Dresden as an infantry instructor, being promoted Major in April 1932. That October he was posted to command Infanterie Regiment 17, remaining with this unit until 1 March 1935, when he was promoted Oberstleutnant and posted to the Kriegsschule at Potsdam. During his time there Rommel published an acclaimed book on infantry tactics, *Infanterie Greift An* ('Infantry Attack'), and in August 1937 he was promoted to the rank of Oberst. Although he never joined the General Staff, Rommel did enjoy the patronage of the Bavarian General List.



An informal shot of Erwin Rommel after his elevation to Generalfeldmarschall in June 1942. Here he wears his everyday lightweight tropical uniform, without most of the decorations worn on full dress uniform, but displaying his Knight's Cross with Oakleaves and Swords, and his World War I 'Blue Max' won at Caporetto. Worn above the breast pocket is the blue ribbon of the Italian Bravery Medal in Silver. (Josef Charita)

Hitler was always on the lookout for talented 'new men' to counter the influence of the old Junker class among the officer corps; and in October 1938, following the annexation of the Sudetenland, he appointed Rommel as temporary commander of the *Führerbegleitbataillon,* his Army personal escort unit, during a visit to the newly seized territory. The following month Rommel was posted to command the Kriegsakademie at Wiener-Neustadt; but in March 1939 he was once again called to command the *Führerbegleitbataillon,* and on 1 June was promoted to Generalmajor. With his choice of commands, he asked for one of the new armoured divisions which were attracting the interest of many ambitious officers; and on 15 February 1940, GenMaj Rommel was given command of 7. Panzer Division for the campaign in the West.

The attack on France and the Low Countries opened on 10 May 1940. As part of XXXIX Panzerkorps, 7. Panzer Division crossed the Meuse and by 21 May had reached Arras. There a British counter-attack briefly unnerved Rommel; he thrust on, however, leading always from the front, often in personal danger and out of contact with his staff – a persistent habit of his. On 26 May Rommel was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross; and on 8 June his division reached the coast at Les Petites Dalles. Turning north, 7. Panzer surrounded St Valery, and on 18 June the division reached Cherbourg – on one single day Rommel covered 150 miles. During the campaign 7. Panzer took more than 100,000 prisoners and 300 guns, and captured or destroyed some 450 armoured vehicles.

In January 1941 Rommel was promoted Generalleutnant; and in February he was given command of a German force being sent to assist the Italians in North Africa, where they had been defeated with ease by a much weaker British force. Rommel landed in Tripoli on 14 February;

GenMaj Rommel, shown here after the capture by his 7. Pz Div of St Valery on the Channel coast of France in June 1940. At left is Gen Victor Fortune, commander of the British 51st (Highland) Div, which was forced to surrender to 7. Panzer. (US National Archives)

within days he was in action with his advanced party, successfully engaging British units near El Agheila. A few weeks later he was ordered to return to Berlin, where on 19 March he was invested with the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross, in retrospective recognition of his achievements in 1940. Before his return to Africa a few days later his troops had captured El Agheila itself. Emboldened by this success, and in defiance of explicit orders not to launch any major attacks, Rommel made a successful surprise assault on positions at Mersa el Brega, and pressed on with a three-pronged advance eastwards, with the intention of seizing the whole of Cyrenaica.

Benghazi and Derna fell to the advancing Afrikakorps, which was soon at the gates of Tobruk; but on 11 April a two-day battle to seize this strategic port ended in failure. A further attack from late April until 2 May also failed to dislodge the British garrison. Rather than delay his advance, Rommel by-passed Tobruk and continued his advance eastwards. On 15 June he fended off a British counter-attack ('Battleaxe') in a battle which saw over 200 outclassed British tanks destroyed for the loss of just 12 of his own. On 1 July 1941, Rommel was promoted to General der Panzertruppe. Running short of supplies, however, he was inevitably forced onto the defensive, and gradually fell back to Mersa el Brega.

This pattern of fast, daring advances and tactical victories, followed by bogging down at the end of long, unsustainable lines of supply across the desert, would become familiar. So too would Rommel's frequent disregard of superior orders; his independence, energy, and talent for sensing and seizing an opportunity, which sometimes led him into failed gambles; and his inability to work smoothly with his Italian allies, of whom his World War I experience had left him with a poor opinion. Rommel was unsophisticated, hard-headed and practical; he made great demands on his staff and troops, but shared every hardship and risk, and inspired their confidence and devoted loyalty.

Another attractive quality was his old-fashioned military chivalry: Rommel would burn Hitler's orders that captured British commandos should be shot, and later in his career would on two occasions demand (in vain) the punishment of SS personnel guilty of atrocities in Italy and France.

On 17 November 1941, the British launched Operation 'Crusader', to punch through the German lines and relieve Tobruk while forces from inside the garrison struck out to attack the Germans from the rear. In the battles that raged over the next few weeks Rommel's forces succeeded in completely disrupting the British attack and inflicting very heavy losses, but by 12 December they were forced back to the Gazala line. Nevertheless, on 20 January 1942, Rommel was decorated with the Swords to his Knight's Cross; and on the 22nd he was promoted Generaloberst. His command was raised to the status of an Armoured Army (though in practice his German units amounted to little more than a reinforced corps).

On 21 January 1942, Rommel made a surprise advance which recaptured the port of Benghazi; his major problems were logistic, as British strength in tanks and aircraft slowly increased, and the Axis failure to eliminate Malta's air and submarine bases continued to expose his own sea supply lanes to interference.

Rommel's renewed attack on the Gazala line on 26 May 1942 cost him heavily in tanks, but he succeeded in out-generalling and out-fighting British 8th Army early in June; on 21 June the South African garrison of Tobruk surrendered. This was the summit of Rommel's achievements; on 22 June Hitler promoted him Generalfeldmarschall – at 50, the youngest in the German forces. His meteoric rise and the publicity given to him by Goebbels' propaganda machine made him a national hero, but earned him jealous enemies. His contemporaries acknowledged his energy and flair, but several of them regarded him as an adventurer, promoted beyond his natural level as a corps commander.

Despite these laurels, Rommel received only a fraction of the reinforcements and supplies he needed to face the steadily growing 8th Army. He gambled once more on 23 June 1942, capturing Mersa Matruh; but at the end of August his advance into Egypt was solidly blocked at Alam el Halfa by 8th Army's new commander,

This 1944 photo shows Rommel (centre) at a conference with GFM von Rundstedt (right) shortly before the Allied invasion of Normandy. Of interest is the Pilot's Badge with Diamonds worn by Rommel – an honorary award in the gift of Reichsmarschall Göring. (US National Archives)

Gen Bernard Montgomery. The cautious Montgomery maintained his positions on the El Alamein line while systematically building up his forces until they outnumbered the German/Italian army nearly two to one. On 23 October 1942, when Montgomery attacked, Rommel was on sick leave in Germany, and his temporary replacement, Gen Georg Stumme, died of a heart attack the following day. Rommel rushed back to Africa, still not fully recovered; but Montgomery persisted in his assaults despite heavy losses, until the Italian divisions disintegrated and the German armour was ground away. By 3 November, Rommel had only 24 tanks still operational, and Hitler grudgingly gave his approval for a withdrawal.

Hitler's promises of reinforcement proved vain, and Rommel was steadily pushed westwards towards Tunisia. He was ill, exhausted, and handicapped by a divided command structure when, on 4 March 1943, he unwillingly obeyed Hitler's orders for a counter-attack at Medenine. British intelligence were forewarned, and the Germans suffered heavy losses before being forced onto the retreat once again. On 9 March Rommel was summoned home and sent on sick leave; Hitler did not want the German people's favourite field marshal personally associated with the inevitable defeat in Africa, which came on 12 May. On 11 March 1943, Rommel was decorated with the supreme award of the Diamonds to the Knight's Cross.

After a series of largely advisory commands in rear areas, in November 1944 Rommel was named as C-in-C of Army Group B in France, charged with preparing the Atlantic Wall defences against the inevitable Allied invasion attempt. He threw himself into this task; but his control over troop dispositions was strictly limited, and many of his recommendations were turned down. When the Allies finally landed in Normandy on 6 June 1944 he was again absent, having unluckily taken a few days' home leave. Given his inability to deploy the armoured reserves on his own responsibility, it may be argued whether his presence on D-Day would have made much difference. Rommel sought the support of fellow commanders – even such hard-bitten Waffen-SS generals as 'Sepp' Dietrich and Willi Bittrich – in an attempt to reason with Hitler; he was personally convinced that separate peace negotiations with the Western Allies should be attempted. However, Rommel's ability to affect events came to a sudden end on 17 July 1944, when his staff car was strafed by an RAF fighter near Livarot.

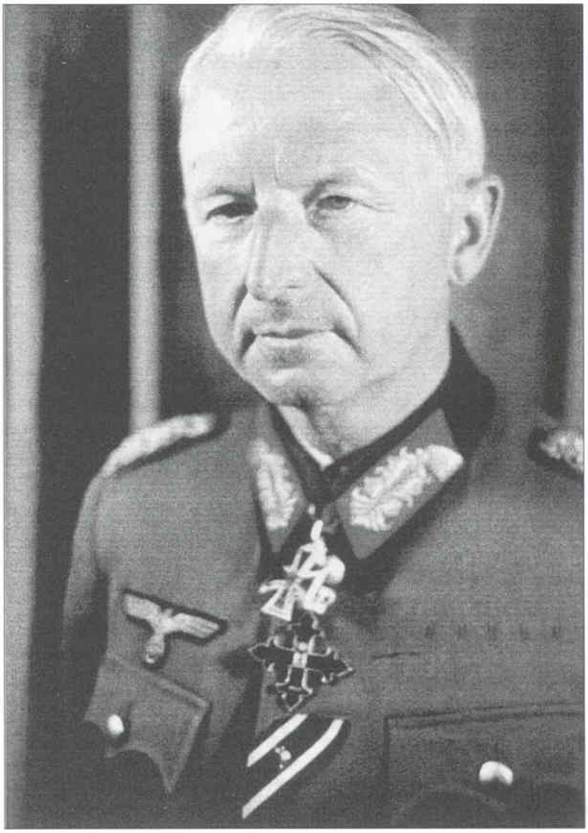
Three days later, while he was under treatment for his serious wounds, the bomb attempt on Hitler's life failed. Rommel was on friendly terms with a number of the chief conspirators, and had been sounded out in general terms, but there is no evidence that he was privy to the details of the plot.

Nonetheless, while in hospital after a failed attempt to blow his brains out, Gen von Stulpnagel, one of the ringleaders, was overheard to mutter Rommel's name in his delirium; and a second man may have implicated Rommel under torture.

Hitler had no wish to grant the Allies the propaganda gift of seeing Germany's most famous soldier condemned for treason. Rommel was offered a guarantee of safety for his family if he agreed to take poison, and did so on 7 October 1944. The German people were treated to the spectacle of a state funeral for their greatest hero, 'dead of his wounds'.

Generalfeldmarschall Erich von Manstein (Plate A1)

While Rommel may have achieved lasting fame, many commentators believe that the most able of all Germany's marshals – combining high intellect with the imagination and decisiveness of a born field commander – was Erich von Manstein. Born Fritz Erich Lewinski on 24 November 1887 in Berlin, he was one of the ten children of a Prussian artillery officer, Gen Eduard von Lewinski; following the death of his parents he was adopted by his uncle Gen Georg von Manstein, whose name he took thereafter. His career as a soldier began in 1906, when he became an Ensign (officer candidate) with the 3rd Foot Guards, in which he was commissioned Leutnant in 1914.



A formal portrait of GFM Erich von Manstein. At his throat, below the Knight's Cross, is the Romanian Order of Michael the Brave; in southern Russia he had large Romanian forces under his command. The ribbon in his buttonhole is that of the 1914 Iron Cross 2nd Class.

During World War I, Manstein served on both the Western and Russian fronts. Wounded while fighting in the East, he was appointed to the staff of an army group commander; promoted Hauptmann in 1915, he later filled other staff positions for the rest of the war. In the new Reichswehr he served on Gen von Lossberg's staff, and by 1927 had reached the rank of Major. In 1932 he was promoted Oberstleutnant and for a short time commanded a Jäger battalion. Shortly after the Nazis came to power in 1933, Manstein was promoted to Oberst and was subsequently appointed head of the Operations Department on the General Staff of the new Wehrmacht.

He was elevated to Generalmajor in 1937, commanding 18. Infanterie Division the next year; and to Generalleutnant by April 1939, becoming Rundstedt's chief-of-staff at Army Group A that August. He excelled in this post during the Polish campaign, and during the preparations for the campaign in the West. Unimpressed by the General Staff's intention to follow the basic plan conceived by Schleiffen in 1914, he contributed his own plans for an attack into France. These involved a powerful armoured force striking through the supposedly impenetrable wooded hills of the Ardennes, and seizing the bridges over the Meuse prior to by-passing the Maginot Line defences and cutting off enemy forces in the north. Hitler was impressed by the audacity of the scheme, and overruled its rejection by the OKH (Oberkommando des Heeres).

Manstein was given command of XXXVIII Armeekorps for the attack in the West; although this was a secondary formation, he handled it extremely well and advanced with impressive speed. Manstein was promoted to General der Infanterie in June 1940 and, on 19 July, was awarded the Knight's Cross for his contribution to the success of the *Westfeldzug*.

In early 1941 Manstein was given command of LVI Panzerkorps on the northern front for the forthcoming invasion of the Soviet Union.

Manstein is seen here during a meeting with Adolf Hitler in March 1943. Manstein's relationship with the Führer grew increasingly stormy, and he ignored Hitler's orders on more than one occasion – a tendency which cost him his appointment in March 1944. (US National Archives)

With the launch of Operation 'Barbarossa' his armoured corps advanced some 200 miles in four days, capturing bridges across the Duna river and coming very close to seizing Leningrad before being ordered to halt and await support. In August his corps was shifted to 16. Armee around Starya Russa, where he got a stalled advance moving again.

In September 1941 Manstein was given command of 11. Armee, part of Rundstedt's Heeresgruppe Süd, and ordered to drive on Rostov with the ultimate aim of capturing the Crimea. Given his weakness in armour this was too ambitious, but by early November he had taken Simferopol and more than 430,000 prisoners. The onset of winter brought massive Soviet counter-attacks, great difficulties, and Manstein's unpopular dismissal of the XLII Korps commander, Gen Graf von Sponeck. Promoted Generaloberst on 1 January 1942, Manstein was forced onto the defensive for four months. On 11 May 1942, he attacked once more, on the Kerch Peninsula; in six days his imaginative plans overcame much stronger defenders for light German casualties. In early June he had a hairsbreadth escape when on reconnaissance in an Italian torpedo boat which was strafed by Russian fighters, killing several members of his immediate staff. A few days later he launched his first attacks on Sevastopol – the strongest fortress in Russia – with an unprecedented five-day barrage. Successive lines of forts were taken, at heavy cost, and the final assaults captured the city on 3 July. In recognition of this brilliant victory Erich von Manstein was elevated to the rank of Generalfeldmarschall dating from 1 July 1942.

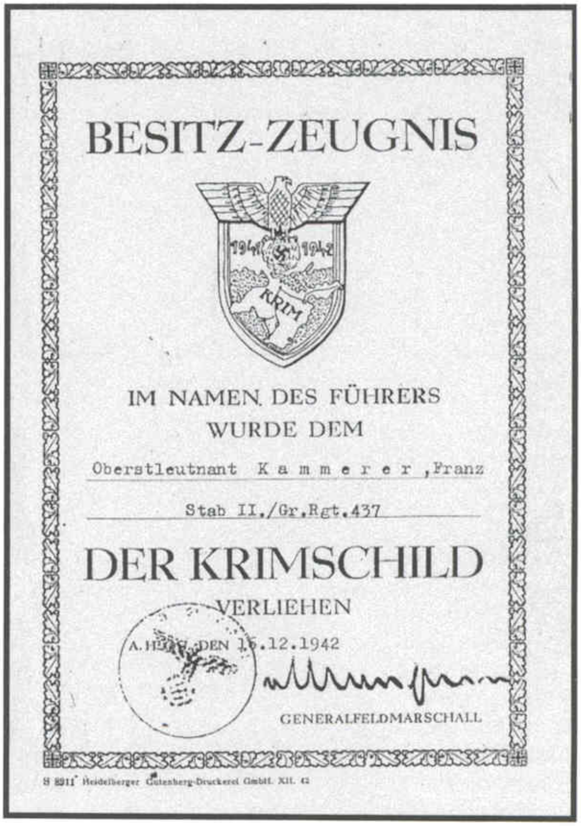
He was immediately transferred north once again, and in August took command of the German forces facing Leningrad; but his 11. Armee was weakened, and in September he was forced onto the defensive by Soviet pressure.

On 27 November 1942, Manstein was brought south and given command of the new Heeresgruppe Don; this comprised both the 6. Armee encircled in Stalingrad, and German/Romanian forces of variable quality which were tasked with breaking the siege. Manstein launched his rescue mission on 12 December; by Christmas Eve Gen Hoth's spearhead was within 30 miles of the city when the attempt had to be abandoned, in the face of a new Soviet offensive which smashed through the Italian 8th Army on the Don behind Manstein's left flank. Manstein's subsequent controlled retreat doomed the 200,000 men of 6. Armee, but avoided both the encirclement of Heeresgruppe Don and the cutting off of Kleist's Heeresgruppe A in the Caucasus to the south-east.

Given command of Heeresgruppe Süd in February 1943, Manstein was nearly dismissed by Hitler when he gave up Kharkov, but recaptured it on 15 March – a success swiftly followed by the capture of Belgorod. On 14 March he was decorated with the Oakleaves to the Knight's Cross.

Hitler insisted on a major offensive against the Kursk salient in July 1943, against the judgement of both Manstein and Model, who would command the southern and northern prongs of the attack respectively. Manstein had made the greater progress when Hitler abandoned the costly offensive on 17 July. Manstein's requests both for withdrawals to shorten the front, and a reorganization of the high command in the East (to reduce the malign influence of Hitler and his pliable generals at Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, OKW), put his employment in jeopardy despite his great talents.

Forced during the autumn into a masterly fighting retreat of 250 miles to the west bank of the Dnieper, Manstein concentrated on holding this line during winter 1943/44, while repeating his requests for a rationalized command structure. In February 1944, however, when 60,000 men were cut off in the Cherkassy (Korsun) Pocket, Manstein ignored Hitler's 'stand fast' instructions and ordered a break-out to the west on 16/17 February. On 30 March, after a series of arguments with the field marshal, a furious Hitler dismissed Manstein from his command. Typically of Hitler, on the same day he decorated Manstein with the Swords to his Knight's Cross.



BESITZ-ZEUGNIS

IM NAMEN DES FÜHRERS
WURDE DEM

Oberstleutnant Kammerer, Franz

Stab II./Gr.Rgt.437

DER KRIMSCHILD

VERLIEHEN

A.H.QU., DEN 15.12.1942

GENERALFELDMARSCHALL

S 8911 Heidelberger Gutenberg-Druckerei GmbH. XII. 42

1941
1942
KRIM

One of GFM Manstein's greatest achievements was the defence of the Crimea during the crisis of winter 1941/42. In recognition of this campaign a special award was created for participating troops, in the form of a bronzed metal shield to be worn on the upper left sleeve; Manstein himself received a special version in solid gold. As C-in-C of 11. Armee, his signature appeared on the official award document for each shield.

Erich von Manstein retired to his home at Liegnitz, where he remained until January 1945 when the approach of the Red Army obliged him to evacuate his family westwards. Taken prisoner by the British in May 1945, Manstein was transferred to a special POW camp for high-ranking officers in the UK, finally returning to Germany in mid-1948. He died in retirement in Bavaria on 11 June 1973, aged 86.

Generalfeldmarschall Walter Model (Plate A3)

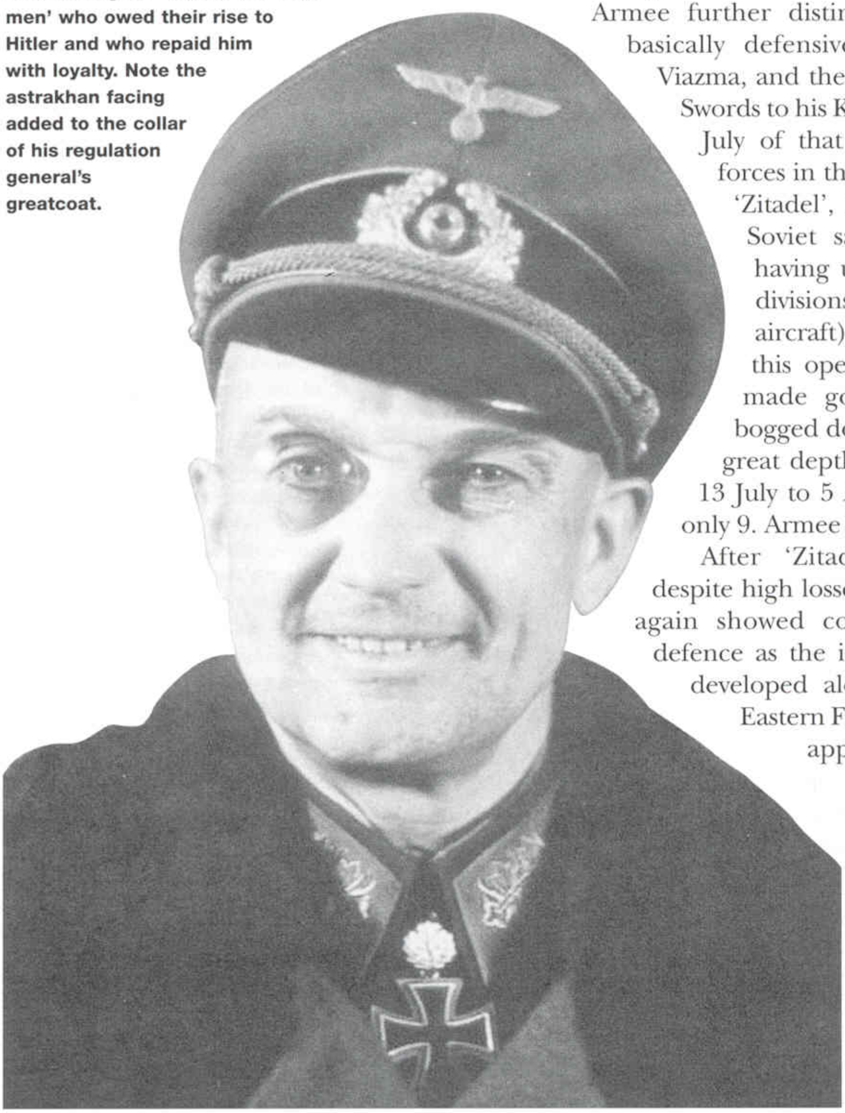
Born near Magdeburg in 1891, the son of a Lutheran schoolmaster, Model began his military career as a cadet, but only just scraped through his training to gain his commission as a Leutnant in 1910. He saw front line service in World War I with Infanterie Regiment 52, eventually reaching the rank of Hauptmann.

By 1934 he had achieved a regimental command and the rank of Oberst. In 1935 Model was appointed to the Technical Department of the Oberkommando des Heeres. He became a protégé of Propaganda Minister Goebbels; in 1938 he was appointed chief-of-staff of IV Armeekorps, and served in this position during the Polish campaign. In April 1940, just before the offensive in the West, he was appointed chief-of-staff of 16. Armee with the rank of Generalmajor. After the successful conclusion of that campaign he was given command of 3. Panzer Division and promoted Generalleutnant.

Serving under Schweppenburg and Guderian, Model's division performed well during the opening phases of Operation 'Barbarossa' and its commander attracted attention for his aggressive energy. In July 1941 he was awarded the Knight's Cross, and by October he had been promoted to General and given command of XLI Panzerkorps. In early 1942, General der Panzertruppe Model was appointed to command 9. Armee in the central sector of the Eastern Front, at the height of the dangerous Soviet winter counter-offensive. In furious fighting around Rzhev, Model's troops rebuffed at least four major enemy attacks, holding their positions before going over to the offensive and partially destroying the Soviet 29th and 39th Armies. For his part in this campaign Model was promoted Generaloberst and received the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross on 17 February 1942. This astonishing rise, from colonel to four-star general in just three years, was a tribute to Model's dash in the attack, determination in defence, and talent for improvisation. Although he never hesitated to expend their lives, he was popular with his troops; he often showed himself in the front lines, and was thought to be lucky.

Throughout 1942 and early 1943 the short-handed 9. Armee further distinguished itself in a series of basically defensive battles around Rzhev and Viazma, and the army commander received the Swords to his Knight's Cross on 2 April 1943. In July of that year, Model commanded the forces in the northern pincer of Operation 'Zitadel', intended to nip off the huge Soviet salient around Kursk. Despite having under command five corps (21 divisions, including 900 tanks, plus 730 aircraft), Model argued in vain against this operation. In the event his forces made good early progress, but soon bogged down with heavy losses due to the great depth of the enemy defences. From 13 July to 5 August Model commanded not only 9. Armee but also 2. Panzerarmee.

After 'Zitadel' was abandoned Model, despite high losses in men and equipment, once again showed considerable flair and skill in defence as the inevitable Soviet counter-attacks developed along the central sector of the Eastern Front. In late January 1944 he was appointed to command Heeresgruppe Nord. He was one of the few senior commanders whom Hitler trusted sufficiently to allow him to make tactical withdrawals in order to stabilize his front line, something that Model achieved with considerable success. On 30 March 1944, Model was given command of Heeresgruppen Nordu-



Walter Model often appears grim-faced and solemn in his portraits. Here, in a portrait of him in the rank of Generaloberst after the award of the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross, he appears to be in an unusually buoyant mood. Despite the monocle he affected in his right eye, Model was no Prussian aristocrat, but from relatively humble origins – one of the 'new men' who owed their rise to Hitler and who repaid him with loyalty. Note the astrakhan facing added to the collar of his regulation general's greatcoat.

kraine and Süd, replacing Manstein, and one day later he was promoted Generalfeldmarschall – at 53, Germany's youngest.

In June 1944 Gen Busch's Heeresgruppe Mitte collapsed under a massive offensive by several Russian armies – Operation 'Bagration'. Model was given the order to 'save whatever can be saved'; still officially in command of Heeresgruppe Nordukraine as well, he was now the most powerful German commander ever to serve on the Eastern Front. He sprang into action, and began to organize the shattered remnants of the army group. It is said that when Model arrived to take command of the situation, and was asked by GenLt Krebs what reinforcements he was bringing, he replied 'Myself!' He built 'scratch' units from stragglers, organized defensive positions, transformed a panicked rabble into a cohesive fighting force once more, and restored supplies of ammunition and equipment. Gradually the German resistance stiffened, and by mid-August 1944 the Red Army had finally been halted – though on the very borders of German territory.

A delighted Hitler declared Model to be 'the saviour of the Eastern Front', and on 17 August awarded him the Diamonds to his Knight's Cross, as one of only 28 recipients of this decoration. That month Model was sent to replace Kluge as commander-in-chief of Heeresgruppe B as well as Commander-in-Chief (Oberbefehlshaber) West, in the hope that the genius of the Eastern Front could help stem the Allied advance in Normandy.

Model was abrasive and unpopular with other officers both as a commander and a subordinate, but his tactical talents were respected; and as a loyal Nazi he was able to stand up to Hitler as very few other generals dared to do. Within three months, however, his troops had been forced out of France; he was subsequently replaced as Oberbefehlshaber West by GFM von Rundstedt, although retaining command of Heeresgruppe B.

LEFT **GFM Model with officers of his staff, in a photo whose autograph is dated 4 February 1945, only a couple of months before he shot himself. He wears the 'Diamonds' – the Oakleaves clasp studded with small diamond chips – and the Swords to his Knight's Cross.**

ABOVE **In this grainy photo Model emerges from a field conference; to his left is SS-Stubaf Heinrich Springer, his orderly officer. Although Springer was a decorated combat veteran, many Army officers were dismayed at Model's appointment of a member of the Waffen-SS to this role. Model rated the major very highly, however, and recommended him for further promotion.**

His mastery of defensive fighting came to the fore again as he withdrew his army group northwards through Belgium and into Holland and stabilized the central front. His troops held the Allies at bay for over 80 days as they attempted to take the Scheldt estuary, and the defeat of the British airborne attack at Arnhem in September owed something to his rapid reactions. In December 1944 he took a major part – despite his misgivings – in the ill-fated Ardennes offensive, where his command included both 5. Panzerarmee (Manteuffel) and 6. Panzerarmee (Dietrich).

Model also argued for a withdrawal east of the Rhine to build up the Siegfried Line defences, but Hitler remained obsessed with holding every yard of ground at whatever cost.

When the Allies crossed the Rhine, Model's 21 remaining divisions, numbering some 325,000 men, became trapped in the Ruhr Pocket in April 1945 by the advance of three US armies, and morale began to collapse. The only possible relief force was diverted towards Berlin in the forlorn hope of saving the capital. Model's attempts to break out both to the north and the south failed, and on 14 April the pocket was split in two when US forces met at Hagen on the Ruhr river. With any hope of saving his command gone, and having no wish to face the consequences of final defeat and capture, Walter Model shot himself in a wood near Duisburg on 21 April 1945.

Generalfeldmarschall Ferdinand Schörner (Plate B1)

Ferdinand Schörner was born in Munich on 12 June 1892, the son of a police official. In 1911 he served briefly as a volunteer with the Bavarian Army, before commencing studies to become a schoolteacher. With the outbreak of war in 1914 he returned to the military and served as a Leutnant of the reserve. Schörner saw a great deal of combat, both on the Western Front (including Verdun), and with the Bavarian regiment of the Alpine Corps on the Italian front. At Caporetto in October 1917 he led his platoon in attacks on Italian positions on the Kolorat Ridge and Hill 1114, earning the Pour le Mérite decoration. Accepted by the Reichswehr after the Armistice, he later became a convinced supporter of the Nazi regime; by 1937 he had achieved the rank of Oberstleutnant and command of Gebirgsjäger Regiment 98.

Schörner's troops fought well during the Polish campaign, participating in the capture of the Zbolska Heights and the city of Lemberg; and again in the 1940 *Westfeldzug*. In August 1940 Oberst Schörner was promoted Generalmajor and given command of 6. Gebirgs Division. His division distinguished itself in Greece and later on Crete, earning its commander the Knight's Cross on 20 April 1941.

Schörner's division subsequently served on the northern sector of the Russian Front, opposite Murmansk. A promotion to Generalleutnant followed in January 1942 when he was appointed to command XIX Gebirgskorps. In the hard defensive fighting of that winter Schörner's troops held off repeated heavy attacks; he earned a reputation as a forceful and determined commander, driving his men hard, but always right at the front with his troops. Although a ruthless disciplinarian he showed care for the welfare of his men when he could. He was promoted General der Gebirgstruppe on 1 June 1942, to command all German troops on the northern Norwegian front.

Despite his mountain infantry background, in October 1943 Schörner was appointed to command XL Panzerkorps on the Dnieper sector of the central Russian Front. He was soon leading a temporary army of three corps – Gruppe Schörner, or Armeeabteilung Nikopol – holding a 75-mile front against heavy odds. He once again showed himself extremely able in defensive actions, rebuffing several major Soviet attacks. When in January/February 1944 positions flanking Schörner's command were overrun, he conducted a skilful fighting withdrawal from the so-called Nikopol Pocket bridgehead on the east bank of the Dnieper, saving most of his men – an example of outstanding generalship which earned him the admiration of his troops and, on 17 February 1944, the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross. He was also appointed head of the National Socialist Political Guidance Corps, a group broadly analogous to the political commissars of the Soviet regime.

Two weeks later Schörner was promoted Generaloberst, with command of Heeresgruppe Süd Ukraine in succession to Kleist. In April 1944 he flew to Germany to argue in vain against Hitler's order to hold the Crimea. When further defence became impossible in May, Hitler agreed to his repeated request for an evacuation, but too late to save most of the troops involved.

Gen Ferdinand Schörner, in a typically unsmiling portrait. Although Schörner developed a reputation as a stern disciplinarian, he did show care for the welfare of his men; he was more likely to behave harshly towards rear echelon elements, often sending divisional or corps staff who earned his displeasure for a spell in the front line. He was even known to refuse or ignore orders that he felt would cause unnecessarily high levels of casualties. (Josef Charita)

Schörner was appointed on 24 July 1944 to command Heeresgruppe Nord. Hard pressed in the Baltic states, he eventually ignored 'stand fast' orders from Führer Headquarters and withdrew his armies from hopeless positions north of Riga, where they were under threat of being swamped fully by 20 Soviet corps. Despite his disobedience he was decorated with the Swords to his Knight's Cross on 28 August 1944.

Ultimately, his 16. and 18. Armee were cut off on land after withdrawing into Kurland. Hitler refused to countenance a general evacuation by sea, and this time Schörner did not demur: although their position was all but hopeless, these troops were tying down over 100 enemy divisions that would otherwise be free to turn south against the German armies battling desperately on the central front.

On 1 January 1945, Schörner was decorated with the Diamonds to his Knight's Cross, and took command of Heeresgruppe A (1. & 4. Panzerarmee, 9. & 17. Armee), holding a line from north of Warsaw in Poland down to the Czechoslovakian Carpathians. Driven back to the Oder river line by late January, his command was retitled Heeresgruppe Mitte; it had the battered remnants of 24 divisions, to hold a 300-mile front. Despite a masterly defence that blunted the next Soviet offensive and inflicted huge losses, Schörner could not prevent the loss of Upper Silesia by the end of March. On 3 April 1945, he was promoted Generalfeldmarschall, the last German soldier ever to reach that rank. In late April he inflicted another setback on Soviet forces advancing south of Berlin. Before Hitler committed suicide he appointed Schörner his successor as Commander-in-Chief of the Army (Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres), a reflection of his continuing trust.

Schörner flew from the Eastern Front to the Tyrol in May 1945, and surrendered himself to US troops – an act which brought him lasting unpopularity among many Eastern Front soldiers. He was handed over to the Soviets, who sentenced him to 25 years for war crimes. Nevertheless, he was released in 1955 – and on his return to Germany was re-arrested, for the murder of German soldiers who had been executed on his orders during the closing days of the war. A court in Munich found him guilty of manslaughter in 1957, and he served another four and a half years in prison. Schörner lived in relative obscurity after his release, and died of a heart attack in Munich on 6 July 1973.

Schörner pictured in the field, somewhere on the Eastern Front in winter. His Knight's Cross with Oakleaves and Swords is clearly visible at his throat, dating the picture to after August 1944. Of interest are the tinted spectacles worn in place of his normal glasses, presumably to protect against the glare from snow. (Josef Charita)

Generalfeldmarschall Gerd von Rundstedt (Plate B2)

Karl Rudolf Gerd von Rundstedt was born at Aschersleben, near Halle, on 12 December 1875, the son of a major-general of aristocratic Prussian stock. In March 1892 he joined the army as an Ensign with Infanterie Regiment 83, gaining his commission as Leutnant with Infanterie Regiment 121 on 17 June 1893. He was promoted Oberleutnant in 1902, and Hauptmann in March 1907.

On the outbreak of World War I, Rundstedt was posted as operations officer with 22. Reserve Infanterie Division. Between November 1914 and spring 1915, Major von Rundstedt served on the staff of the military governor of occupied Belgium. In the summer of 1916 he was posted as a chief-of-staff in Armeegruppe Grossherzog Karl, a joint Austro-Hungarian/German formation on the Eastern Front. In the second half of 1917 he became chief-of-staff first of LIII Armeekorps in the East, then of XV Armeekorps on the Western Front; he ended the war as a highly experienced and well-regarded staff officer.

After the war Rundstedt was appointed chief-of-staff to 3. Kavallerie Division; he rose steadily in the small post-war army, and in February 1923 was given command of Infanterie Regiment 18 in the rank of Oberst – a command in which he took part in the ruthless suppression of left-wing uprisings in Thuringia. Promotion to Generalmajor and chief-of-staff of Military District (Wehrkreis) II at Stettin followed in November 1927. As a protégé of GenLt von Schleicher (who was briefly Chancellor of Germany), by March 1929 Rundstedt had been appointed commander of 2. Kavallerie Division and promoted Generalleutnant. In January 1932, Rundstedt was appointed to the important command of Military District III based in Berlin, and that October he was promoted

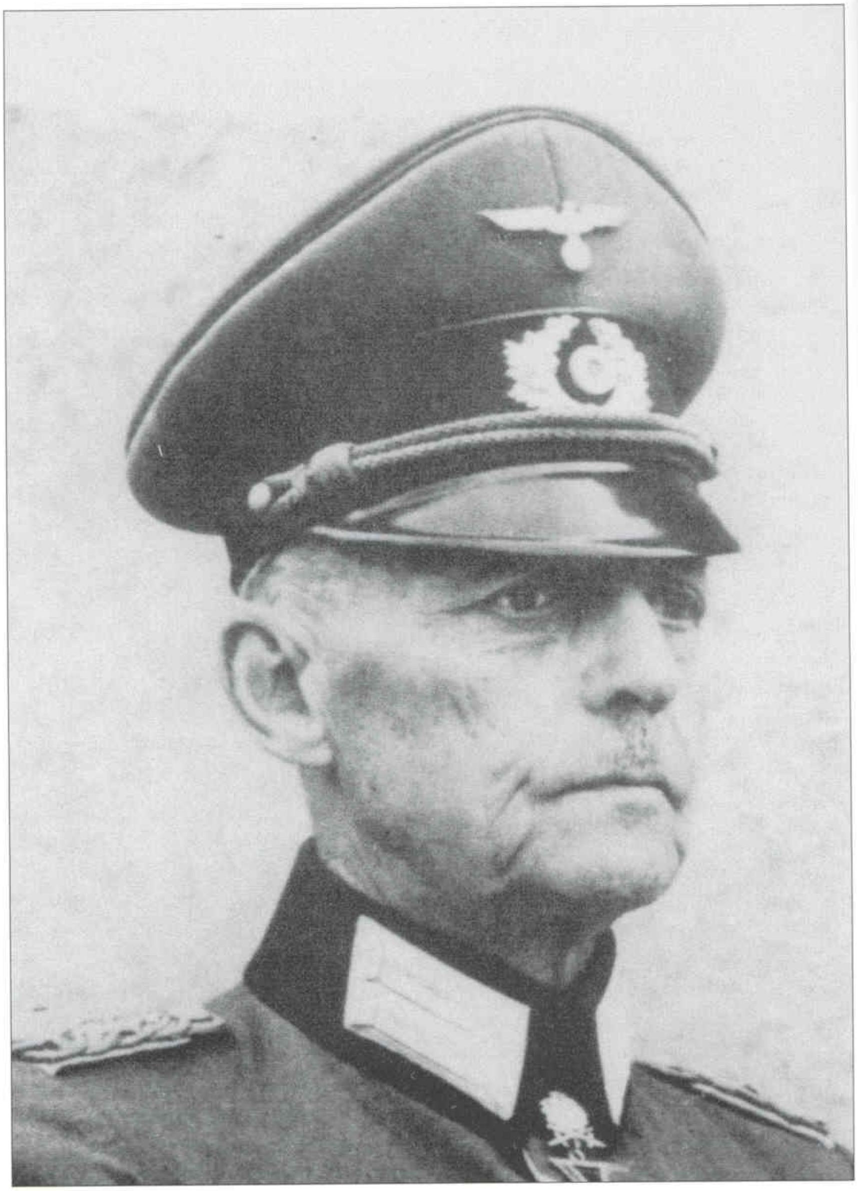
A formal portrait of GFM Gerd von Rundstedt, in the regulation greatcoat with the scarlet lapel facings of a general officer. Despite his lofty rank, Rundstedt preferred to wear the collar patches and shoulder straps of an infantry officer, an entitlement derived from his position as colonel-in-chief of Infanterie Regiment 18.

General der Infanterie with command of 1. Armeegruppe – effectively giving him control of almost half of the entire army.

As a typical member of the traditional Junker class he was disdainful of the Nazis who took power in 1933; but he took full advantage of their rearmament programmes to build the new Wehrmacht and equip it for mobile warfare. He was promoted Generaloberst in March 1938, becoming the second most senior officer in the Army. Disgusted with the Nazis' political interference with the senior ranks of the Army (which extended to false criminal charges against, and even assassination of, generals who resisted them), in October 1938 GenObst von Rundstedt resigned, a couple of months before his 63rd birthday.

With the approach of war, Rundstedt – one of the Wehrmacht's most experienced and respected officers – was recalled from retirement on 1 June 1939. He was given command of Heeresgruppe Süd – three armies, over half a million strong – for the attack on Poland. (From then on, throughout his active career, Rundstedt always held the title of 'Oberbefehlshaber' or Commander-in-Chief of various army groups, or indeed entire fronts.) His part in the Polish campaign of September

A later photograph of Rundstedt taken some time after February 1945, displaying the Oakleaves with Swords to his Knight's Cross; again, note the characteristic uniform as *Chef* of Inf Regt 18. He was furious that the obviously doomed Ardennes offensive of December 1944 was associated with his name, when his powers to influence its planning, as 'Commander-in-Chief West', were purely nominal. Rundstedt yielded to nobody in his contempt for Hitler, as a man and as a military strategist; nevertheless, throughout the war this doyen of the German professional officer corps did nothing to resist or remove the Führer. (Josef Charita)



1939 was almost flawlessly conducted, and Rundstedt was decorated with the Knight's Cross on 30 September. He was also appointed as Oberbefehlshaber Ost, effectively in command of all German forces in Poland. His outspoken condemnation of the behaviour of SS and other security units in occupied Poland resulted in his being removed from this post and reassigned to the West. There he was given command of Heeresgruppe A, on the south central sector of the front, for the attack on France and the Low Countries – his greatest campaign.

In this command Rundstedt enthusiastically backed the plan devised by his chief-of-staff, Manstein, for a thrust through the Ardennes to Sedan to unhinge the French defence. The stubborn promotion of this plan eventually secured Hitler's support, and Gen von Bock's forces for a northern thrust by Heeresgruppe B were greatly reduced to Rundstedt's benefit. Given control of 44 divisions, including Gen

Guderian's armoured corps, in May 1940 Rundstedt was able to put Manstein's plan into practice with stunning success. His brief pause to consolidate in the last week of May, specifically endorsed by Hitler, would later cause controversy for contributing to the escape from Dunkirk of the British Expeditionary Corps.

Following the successful conclusion of the campaign, on 19 July 1940 Rundstedt was promoted Generalfeldmarschall. Subsequently he took command of the occupation forces in France, and would have been responsible for the invasion of Britain if it had been ordered (though he never believed in 'this Sealion rubbish').

For Operation 'Barbarossa' in June 1941, Rundstedt was appointed to command Heeresgruppe Süd: three armies (6., 11. & 17.) plus Kleist's Panzergruppe and allied formations, totalling nearly 60 divisions – though weakened by the distraction of the Balkan campaign in the spring. Rundstedt's front was between the Pripet Marshes and the Carpathians, his objectives the Dnieper crossings, Kiev and Kharkov. His troops made relatively slow progress at first, but Kleist's tanks were reinforced with Guderian's Panzergruppe in August; after a huge battle of encirclement on the lower Dnieper, which cost the Red Army some 665,000 prisoners alone, Kiev fell to 6. Armee on 19 September. Rundstedt's armies were ordered to sweep on across the Ukraine, past Kharkov and then on towards the Crimea and Rostov on the River Don. Rundstedt advised consolidation of the front with the onset of winter, but Hitler was both fixated on the strategic importance of the Crimea and Russia's distant southern oilfields, and determined that his northern armies should capture Moscow. Despite suffering a heart attack in early November, Rundstedt succeeded in taking Rostov, but was soon thrown out again by a Soviet counter-attack. Hitler was enraged when his field marshal demanded permission to carry out a tactical withdrawal of 60 miles to the River Mius, and dismissed Rundstedt from his command on 1 December 1941. (His successor, GFM von Reichenau, soon had to withdraw to the Mius in his turn.)

Just over three months later, however, GFM Rundstedt was recalled to duty once again and given command of occupation forces in France as Oberbefehlshaber West. This was a quiet backwater command, and Rundstedt was content to take a passive role, watching events unfold with an attitude of sardonic detachment. Although he rejected all approaches from the 'bomb plotters', he had no illusions about the ultimate outcome of the war under the national leadership of 'the Bohemian corporal'. Despite his title he had very little control over the deployment of forces; in any case, he judged the Pas de Calais the most likely invasion site, and favoured holding the Panzer reserves back from the coast – both mistaken judgements.

When the invasion came and the Allies secured their beachhead in Normandy, in mid-June 1944 Rundstedt advocated abandoning France south of the Loire and moving all forces north for a battle of manoeuvre. Hitler naturally rejected this idea; and when, after the failure of the counter-attack at Caen on 1 July, GFM Keitel at OKW moaned over the telephone 'What shall we do?', the 69-year-old field marshal replied, 'Make peace, you fools.' The enraged Hitler dismissed him once again the next day, though Rundstedt was nevertheless awarded the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross on 1 July.

On 4 September 1944, Rundstedt was recalled yet again to serve as Oberbefehlshaber West; but by now Hitler was insisting on taking virtually all decisions, and Rundstedt's actual input into the planning of the doomed Ardennes offensive in December – ostensibly his operation – was minimal. He was finally replaced with GFM Kesselring on 10 March 1945, and went into final retirement. At the end of the war Rundstedt was captured by US forces and handed over to the British. During his captivity he suffered a further heart attack; he was released in 1948, and lived quietly in Hannover until his death in 1953.

Generalfeldmarschall Ewald von Kleist (Plate B3)

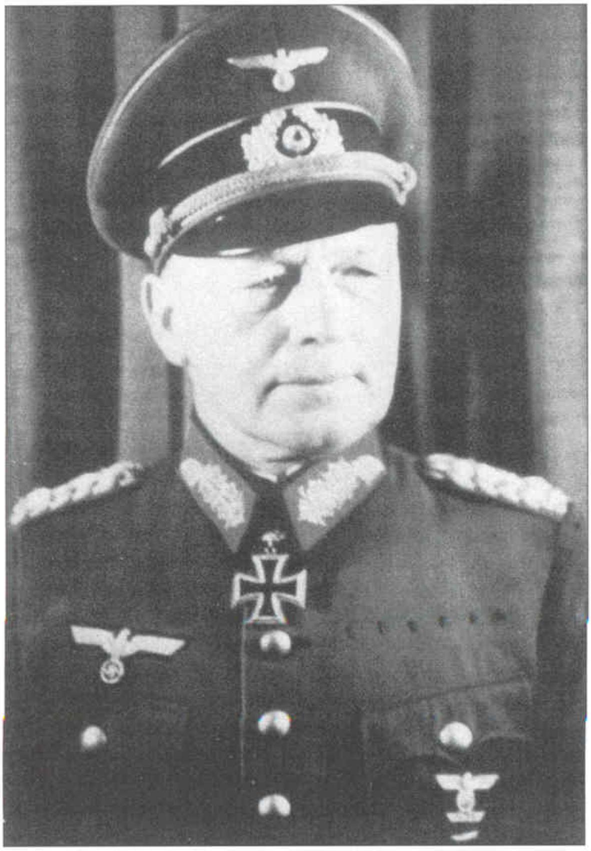
Born in Brauenfels on 8 August 1881, Paul Ludwig Ewald von Kleist was the son of a schoolmaster; however, his family was steeped in military tradition, and had produced more than 30 generals over the centuries. Ewald von Kleist joined the artillery in 1900 as an officer cadet, and in August 1901 was commissioned Leutnant. Promoted Oberleutnant in January 1910, he was posted later that year to the Kriegsakademie, where he stayed for three years. His next regimental posting was to the cavalry, in Liebhusaren Regiment 1, where he was soon promoted Rittmeister (Captain).

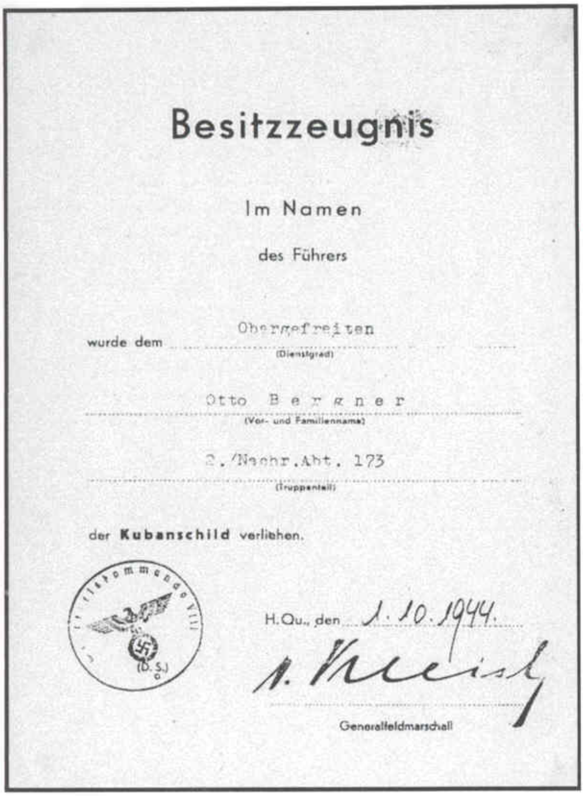
Kleist saw intense action early in World War I, serving with his regiment at the battle of Tannenberg in August 1914. Various staff positions followed, and he became chief-of-staff of the elite Garde Kavallerie Division in 1917. From 1922 to 1926 Major von Kleist was a tactics instructor at the Kavallerieschule in Hanover, rising to command the school and being promoted Oberstleutnant in December 1926. He held other staff appointments before being promoted Oberst in 1929 as commander of Infanterie Regiment 9 at Potsdam. In January 1932 he achieved the rank of Generalmajor, with command of 2. Kavallerie Division based at Breslau. Promotion to Generalleutnant came on 1 October 1933, and to General der Kavallerie on 1 August 1936.

In February 1938, Kleist was one of those who were retired as part of the Nazis' drive to replace all senior officers of whose loyalty they were not certain; but in August 1939 he was recalled to duty, and appointed commander of XXII Armeekorps (mot). The following month this corps formed part of Rundstedt's Heresgruppe Süd in the southern half of a massive pincer movement to divide the Polish armies and isolate Warsaw.

For the 1940 campaign in the West, Kleist was given command of a huge armoured force, Panzergruppe Kleist – in effect an armoured army, comprising XIX & XLI Panzerkorps and XIV Armeekorps: a total of five Panzer and three motorized infantry divisions, with almost 3,000 tanks. Kleist's forces struck through Luxembourg

GenObst Ewald von Kleist, shown here in a formal portrait before his elevation to Generalfeldmarschall. It is quite common to encounter in such photos only the minimum of military decorations being worn; here Kleist wears only his Knight's Cross and 1914 Iron Cross 1st Class with 1939 clasp. Visible on the left breast of his tunic is a long row of thread loops to take an extensive ribbon bar for the other awards to which he was entitled. (Josef Charita)





Besitzzeugnis

Im Namen

des Führers

wurde dem Obergefreiten
(Dienstgrad)

Otto Bergner
(Vor- und Familienname)

2./Nachr.Abt. 173
(Truppenteil)

der **Kubanschild** verliehen.

H.Qu., den 1.10.1944.

v. Kleist

Generalfeldmarschall

Ewald von Kleist was responsible for the defence of the Kuban bridgehead in February–October 1943. Like the defence of the Crimea, this was commemorated by a campaign shield, and as C-in-C of that sector he signed all award documents. Unlike Manstein's gold Crimea Shield, no special version of the Kuban decoration was created for Kleist.

and on through the Ardennes to reach the River Meuse. On 12 May he crossed into France and struck westwards for the English Channel, reaching the Aire-St Omer Canal on 22 May, but being halted there on Rundstedt's orders. At the successful conclusion of the first phase of the campaign, Kleist was decorated with the Knight's Cross on 15 May. His Panzergruppe won further victories against the French before reaching the Atlantic on the Spanish border on 29 June. For his considerable contribution to the victory Kleist was promoted Generaloberst on 19 July 1940.

In April 1941, Kleist led his Panzergruppe into Yugoslavia, forcing that country's surrender in just nine days; he was then moved to allied Romania in preparation for the invasion of the USSR. Attached to Heeresgruppe Süd, Kleist's Panzergruppe 1 struck into the Ukraine; by the end of September, Kiev had fallen to a huge pincer movement of which Kleist's Panzergruppe formed the southern claw. On 6 October, Kleist's formation was upgraded to become 1. Panzerarmee. Kleist's next objective was Rostov on the Don.

The advance deep into Russia had taken its toll, however; combat attrition, mechanical breakdowns and overstretched supply lines all conspired to leave him greatly weakened by the time he reached the approaches to Rostov in mid November 1941. After a three-day battle his troops seized the city on 20 November, but were unable to hold it against powerful counter-attacks. Rundstedt, Kleist's immediate superior, was dismissed, and Hitler sent Kleist himself an insulting signal. Nevertheless, he received the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross on 17 February 1942.

In May 1942 Kleist played a significant role in the battle for Kharkov, where two Panzer armies under his command halted Timoshenko's spring offensive and captured almost a quarter of a million Soviet troops. After this success he returned to command 1. Panzerarmee with eight divisions, as part of Heeresgruppe A for the drive through southern Russia towards the Caucasus oilfields. His spearhead reached Maikop in early August, but the next month the advance bogged down on the Terek river; Kleist was faced by much stronger forces, his supply lines were overstretched, and troops, aircraft and fuel were steadily diverted northwards to Stalingrad. On 5 November, 13. Panzer Division got to within three miles of Ordzhonikidze in northern Ossetia, but that was the furthest east the Wehrmacht ever got.

On 21 November 1942, Kleist was appointed to command Heeresgruppe A. Hitler was still mesmerized by the unreachable oilfields, and while the battle for Stalingrad raged Kleist had to cling to his exposed positions far to the south, with his rear lines constantly threatened by a Soviet break-through. On 1 February 1943, Kleist was promoted Generalfeldmarschall; and later that month, after the fall of Stalingrad, he was at last authorized to withdraw his 400,000 men. His conduct of the retreat from the Caucasus to the Dnieper was masterly, and by March

1943 he was able to launch counter-attacks. Kleist maintained a determined defence of the Kuban bridgehead for several more months, finally being given permission to transport most of his forces by sea over the Straits of Kerch to the Crimea. Despite Kleist's repeated requests Hitler refused to countenance any further withdrawals, and on 1 November 1943 the German forces in the Crimea were cut off.

In March 1944, Kleist allowed his 8. Armee commander, Gen Wöhler, to withdraw behind the Dniester river. On 30 March, Hitler had Kleist flown to his headquarters at the Obersalzburg, where he was first decorated with the Swords to his Knight's Cross, and then relieved of his command. Kleist was a phlegmatic, unexcitable character; he was also a realist, very popular, and an old-fashioned gentleman. In 1944 Hitler wanted ruthless senior commanders of absolute loyalty, and he replaced Kleist with Schörner. Kleist lived in retirement until the Soviet advance in 1945 obliged him to evacuate his family to Bavaria. Taken prisoner by US forces on 25 April, Kleist was held in England before being handed over to the Yugoslavs, who charged him with unspecified war crimes in 1941 and sentenced him to 15 years' imprisonment. Three years later he was handed over to the USSR, and tried on the incredible charge of 'alienating the population through mildness and kindness' – i.e. he was charged with the crime of treating the Russian population better than the Soviet regime itself, and thus encouraging them to side with the Germans. Ewald von Kleist died in solitary confinement in Soviet captivity on 15 October 1954.

OPPOSITE **Gen Eduard Dietl, in a portrait photograph taken after he won renown at Narvik in April–June 1940. Note that he wears the Oakleaves to the Knight's Cross, Dietl being the first soldier of the Wehrmacht to be awarded this newly created decoration. This Bavarian officer was always a convinced National Socialist; in the Reichswehr of the 1920s he was a conduit of information to the young Nazi Party, and he was a supporter of Hitler's attempted *putsch* in Munich in 1923. (Josef Charita)**

ARMY COMMANDERS

Generaloberst Eduard Dietl (Plate C2)

Born in Bad Aibling on 1 July 1890, Eduard Dietl was the son of a Bavarian finance official. In 1909, at his second attempt, he joined Bavarian Infanterie Regiment 5 as an officer cadet, and was commissioned Leutnant in October 1911 after studying at the Kriegsschule in Munich. He was promoted Oberleutnant in October 1915, and served as a company commander with his regiment. Promoted Hauptmann in March 1918, Dietl was wounded in action four times during the war, and was in hospital at the time of the Armistice.

A member of the Epp Freikorps in 1919, Dietl joined the Nazi Party as early as 1920.[1] Dietl served as a company commander with Infanterie Regiment 19 before staff appointments, and a spell as an instructor at the Infanterieschule in Munich, before being given command of his regiment's III (Gebirgsjäger) Bataillon with the rank of Major. On 1 January 1933, he achieved the rank of Oberstleutnant and regimental command. Promotion to Oberst followed in 1935, with command of the newly formed Gebirgsjäger Regiment 99. In April 1938 he was promoted Generalmajor and given command of 3. Gebirgs Division, based at Graz in Austria; the following year he led it during the Polish campaign.

On 9 April 1940, he and his mountain troops were landed at Narvik during the invasion of Norway, although his division was weakened by the detachment of one regiment to seize Trondheim. The initial capture

OPPOSITE **Dietl's signature on the award document for the Narvik Shield, created in honour of his defence of that town. This was the first of a number of such battle decorations. Although such documents often bear only a facsimile stamped signature, this example has a genuine autograph.**

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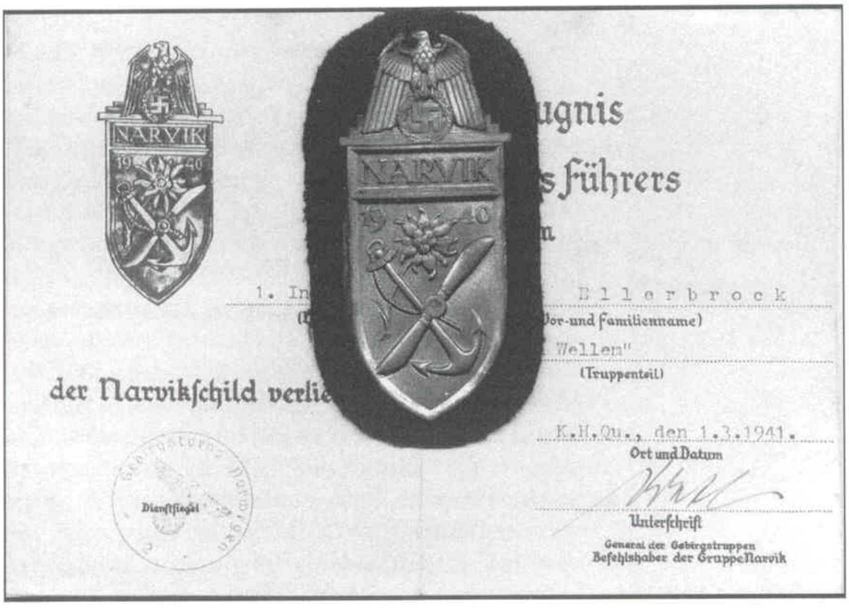
[1] See Elite 76 *The German Freikorps 1918–23*

General der Infanterie DIETL

of the port went well, but the arrival of a powerful British naval force saw the destruction of most of the German destroyers in Narvik Fjord. This left Dietl's force on shore in a perilous position, with the nearest friendly units over 700 miles to the south. On the positive side, some 2,000 sailors were now available to Dietl to bolster his force, and plenty of food, ammunition and weapons were salvaged from ships which had been run aground. A limited number of small artillery pieces were also landed by Luftwaffe transport planes on a nearby frozen lake.

Dietl concentrated his force to defend a limited perimeter around Narvik against determined attacks by British, French, Polish and Norwegian troops supported by heavy gunfire from British warships. On 9 May, during the battle for Narvik, Dietl was promoted to Generalleutnant and decorated with the Knight's Cross. Although he was successful in fending off attacks, steady combat attrition reduced his strength. On 27 May, French Foreign Legion troops with naval support landed in the town, and after bitter fighting seized Narvik port. Although a small number of reinforcements were dropped by parachute, they were too few to make a significant difference.

A two-pronged attempt was then launched to relieve Dietl's force, with reinforcements travelling both by sea and overland. British submarines torpedoed two of the German transports; and those travelling overland faced a trek of over 700 miles across the most barren and inhospitable terrain. The land column then received an order cancelling the operation when they were only a few days' march away – but the reason was good news for the Germans. A patrol sent out by Dietl had reported that the enemy appeared to have abandoned the port. Unknown to the beleaguered Germans in Narvik, the campaign elsewhere in Norway had gone well, and on 9 June Norway surrendered. Dietl was the hero of the hour for his determined defence, but later admitted that he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1. In Ellerbrock

Vor-und Familienname)

Wellen"

(Truppenteil)

der Narvikſchild verlie

K.H.Qu., den 1.3.1941.

Ort und Datum

Unterſchrift

General der Gebirgstruppen
Befehlshaber der Gruppe Narvik

Dienſtſiegel

had been seriously considering withdrawing his forces over the border into neutral Sweden and internment. So great was the impact of this narrow victory on German morale that a special campaign decoration, the Narvik Shield, was created to commemorate the battle.

On 19 July 1940, Dietl was promoted to General der Gebirgstruppe and appointed as commander of Gebirgskorps Norwegen; on the same day he became the first German soldier to win the newly instituted Oakleaves to the Knight's Cross.

In June 1941, GenLt Dietl, as commander of 20. Gebirgsarmee, took two mountain divisions across the far northern sector of the Russian Front along the Finnish-Soviet border, with the task of seizing the vital port of Murmansk with the co-operation of Finnish forces. In the swampy tundra, cut by numerous lakes, progress was difficult and resistance stubborn, and by 19 September Dietl was forced to withdraw into defensive lines behind the Litsa river in front of Petsamo. In January 1942 he was appointed commander of all German forces in Lappland, and in June that year was promoted to Generaloberst.

Dietl's impeccable Nazi credentials kept him in Hitler's favour, and Goebbels' propaganda machine promoted him vigorously. Nevertheless, he failed to achieve any signficant advances on this far northern front. On 23 June 1944, Dietl was summoned to a meeting with Hitler at the Obersalzberg to discuss relations with the Finns, who had become unenthusiastic allies; his aircraft crashed en route, and he was killed. Dietl was posthumously decorated with the Swords to his Knight's Cross on 1 July 1944.

Gen Heinz Guderian, seen here during a field conference. He is wearing the older and slightly more elaborate M1920 form of the general officer's tunic, with eight-button fastening and red piping to the front edge. (Josef Charita)

Generaloberst Heinz Guderian (Plate C3)

Heinz Wilhelm Guderian was born at Kulm on 17 June 1888, into a family of West Prussian landowners. Although Guderian's father was a humble Leutnant and the family had no great tradition of soldiering, he developed a passionate interest in the military. Enrolled at the cadet school at Berlin-Lichterfelde, he graduated in 1907 and joined his father's unit, Jäger Bataillon 10. After a year at the Kriegsakademie he served throughout World War I mainly as a wireless communications specialist, as signals officer of 5. Kavallerie Division and later assistant signals officer at 4. Armee headquarters. Guderian proved a tough, determined and energetic officer; impatient to learn and apply new skills, he took the opportunity to fly as an observer on reconnaissance missions. He also briefly commanded II Btl, Infanterie Regiment 14, and this experience of the horrors of static trench warfare would confirm him as an exponent of fast, mobile warfare. On 28 February 1918, he was appointed to the General Staff, and during the last great spring offensives on the Western Front he gained valuable experience in the movement of large formations.

'Fast Heinz' Guderian with tank officers on the scene of perhaps his greatest triumph – his thrust, at the head of his own XIX Panzerkorps, right across France from the River Meuse to the Channel coast at Boulogne in just over a week during May 1940. (US National Archives)

At the end of World War I, Guderian served with the newly formed frontier force – Grenzschutz Ost – created by Gen von Seeckt to defend the eastern territories from Russian and Polish incursions; he later joined Maj Bischoff's 'Iron Division' Freikorps, which fought in Kurland in 1919. Guderian's interest in mobile warfare was to be given expression when in 1922 he was tasked with studying the possibilities for motorization of the Reichswehr, given the tight restrictions imposed upon it by the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. He investigated the most up-to-date developments in mechanized and armoured warfare, including command and control by radio communications. Guderian could see the potential for the use of armour not merely for infantry support, but as a breakthrough weapon in its own right. In his long struggle against more traditionally minded officers he had a champion in Oberst Oswald Lutz, chief-of-staff to the Inspectorate of Motorized Troops and the true father of the Panzer force. In 1929 Guderian was

Guderian displaying the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross, as well as the ribbon of his 1914 Iron Cross with the 1939 clasp attached. This portrait perhaps hints at Guderian's impatient and hot-tempered nature, which gave him the courage (shown by very few, if any, others) to contradict Hitler face to face and with raised voice. (Josef Charita)

given command of a motorized infantry battalion; and two years later Oberstleutnant Guderian became Lutz's chief-of-staff. From 1933 the climate of opinion swung behind the armour enthusiasts. Hitler himself exclaimed, after seeing a demonstration of mechanized troops organized by Guderian at the Kummersdorf training grounds, 'That's what I need! That's what I want to have!'

Guderian's hard work eventually bore fruit when, in 1935, Gen Lutz won approval for the creation of three armoured divisions, and Guderian was given command of 2. Panzer Division – though initially there were precious few tanks available. In 1936 Guderian was promoted Generalmajor; and in 1938, after Lutz fell foul of the Nazis, Guderian was raised to Generalleutnant and given command of XVI Korps, comprising the three armoured divisions. Hitler wished to give his new armoured formations a high profile, and Guderian began to be seen regularly at the Führer's side – to the chagrin of those who opposed him. In November 1938, Guderian was promoted General and appointed commander of mobile troops (Chef der Schnelltruppe). Just prior to the outbreak of war he was given command of XIX Panzerkorps, a formation with one armoured and two motorized divisions.

Although the tanks committed to the Polish campaign were predominantly light and obsolescent PzKw I and II models, and despite a high level of mechanical breakdowns, the Panzers' performance in 1939 dispelled any remaining doubts over their use as a fast breakthrough weapon to be deployed en masse, in co-operation with tactical aircraft. On 27 October 1939, Guderian was decorated with the Knight's Cross.

Guderian's star was in the ascendant; he was consulted closely by Manstein during the planning of the Western offensive, and his reputation was enhanced even further during that campaign. In the *Westfeldzug* he led XIX Panzerkorps of three Panzer and some motorized divisions, which attacked through the Ardennes – a route thought by many to be impossible for armour – to cross the Meuse at Sedan and drive for the Channel Coast at Abbeville and Calais. However, there were still those who feared the risks of allowing the tanks to run too far ahead of the following infantry support, and Hitler was persuaded to order the tanks to halt to allow the infantry to catch up. The impatient and choleric Guderian, unaware that the halt order had come from Hitler, offered his resignation, and was only persuaded to reconsider by being allowed to continue his advance under the guise of a 'reconnaissance in force'. Guderian was subsequently given command of his own Panzergruppe, comprising two Panzerkorps each with two Panzer and one motorized divisions. At the successful conclusion of the campaign he was promoted to Generaloberst.

For the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 (against which he had argued) Guderian was given command of Panzergruppe 2, with five armoured, three motorized and one cavalry division. As part of Heeresgruppe Mitte, Guderian's 850 tanks slashed through the Soviet western armies towards Smolensk at remarkable speed, reaching the Dnieper in just 15 days. Just as it seemed that Heeresgruppe Mitte could indeed attain its goal of reaching Moscow, Hitler ordered the main thrust of the advance to shift southwards into the Ukraine on 21 August. Guderian played a leading part in the great encirclement battle around Kiev; but by October, when the advance was refocused on Moscow, it was too late – about half Guderian's vehicles had been lost in action or had broken down under the demands of the huge mileages achieved over bad roads.

Facing increasing enemy resistance, and the onset of the Russian winter (for which the Wehrmacht was ill equipped), Guderian managed to advance as far as Tula, 110 miles south of Moscow, before his units ground to a halt. Concerned for the welfare of his thinly clad troops, and handicapped by serious shortages in ammunition and food, Guderian simply ignored orders refusing him permission to make withdrawals, and pulled back his troops wherever he saw fit. His persistent refusal to obey 'stand fast' orders resulted in his dismissal from command on 25 December 1941, just after suffering a minor heart attack.

Guderian remained in enforced retirement, recuperating from his ill health, until March 1943, when he was persuaded to accept the post of Generalinspekteur der Panzertruppe (Inspector General of Armoured Troops). This new role brought Guderian, as the senior officer of the armoured corps, a status equal to that of a commander-in-chief of an army; and with it came direct access to Hitler, in order to argue his opinions on tank design and production (and, since he was both opinionated and fearless, on operational questions which were now beyond his remit). However, while the advisory and trouble-shooting powers of such inspectorates was great, their direct authority to give orders was ambiguous.

During 1943 tentative approaches were made to Guderian by those plotting against Hitler. A straightforward patriot, Guderian would never consider breaking his military oath; but he remained silent about these approaches. On 21 July 1944, in the immediate aftermath of the failed bomb attempt, the raging Führer showed his continuing trust by appointing Guderian as Chief of the Army General Staff. This was a post stripped of much of its real authority; but although the blunt and fearless Guderian repeatedly became involved in furious arguments against Hitler's increasingly dogmatic and ill-judged interference in military decisions, he remained loyal to his duty. Finally, on 27 March

A fine portrait study of GenObst Hans Hube. Nicknamed 'Clever Hans' by the troops, Hube was a courageous, popular and most able commander, whose career deserves to be more widely known. The multitude of medal ribbons worn in addition to his Knight's Cross with Oakleaves and Swords is testimony to his long military service. (Josef Charita)

1945, Hitler had had enough of his insolent general, and ordered Guderian to go on six weeks' sick leave. Long before his leave was up, Hitler had committed suicide and the war was over.

Guderian surrendered to US forces; he was finally released in 1950, and died in retirement in May 1954 at the age of 66.

The cropping of Hube's portraits may be deliberate, to conceal the loss of his left arm in the early weeks of World War I – a handicap which did not prevent him returning to the front line as an infantry company commander. After various staff jobs he was back in the trenches facing British infantry and tanks at the very end of the war, and narrowly missed an award of the *Pour le Mérite*. (Josef Charita)

Generaloberst Hans Hube (Plate C1)

Hans Valentin Hube was born on 29 October 1890 at Naumburg. He enrolled as an officer cadet in Infanterie Regiment 26, being commissioned Leutnant in 1910. A platoon commander on the outbreak of World War I, Hube was appointed as battalion adjutant within days of going into action on the Western Front. Scarcely a month later he was seriously wounded during the battle for Fontenay, and his left arm was amputated. However, the young Hube was a fiercely determined soldier, and somehow persuaded his superiors to allow him to return to front line duty in January 1916, as Oberleutnant commanding 7 Kompanie, Infanterie Regiment 26. Later in that year he was appointed as an orderly officer to the high command of IV Armeekorps; but by the end of the year he had returned to his old regiment as its adjutant. Various staff postings followed, with Hube moving back and forth between his regiment and higher formations. In the closing stages of the war Hauptmann Hube was recommended for the Pour le Mérite for his part in defeating a major British attack with tank support, but the war ended before the award could be approved.

Despite his injuries, Hube was a supremely fit young man and his determination to succeed impressed those charged with building the new Reichswehr. Accepted in October 1919, this keen student of tactics threw himself energetically into his duties, taking a particular interest in realistic field training. Hube was promoted Major in 1932, with command of I Btl, Infanterie Regiment 3. Two years later he was promoted Oberstleutnant, and on 1 May 1935 he was appointed commander of the Infanterieschule at Döberitz. Here Hube wrote a two-volume work entitled *Der Infanterist* ('The Infantryman'), which was to become a standard training text.

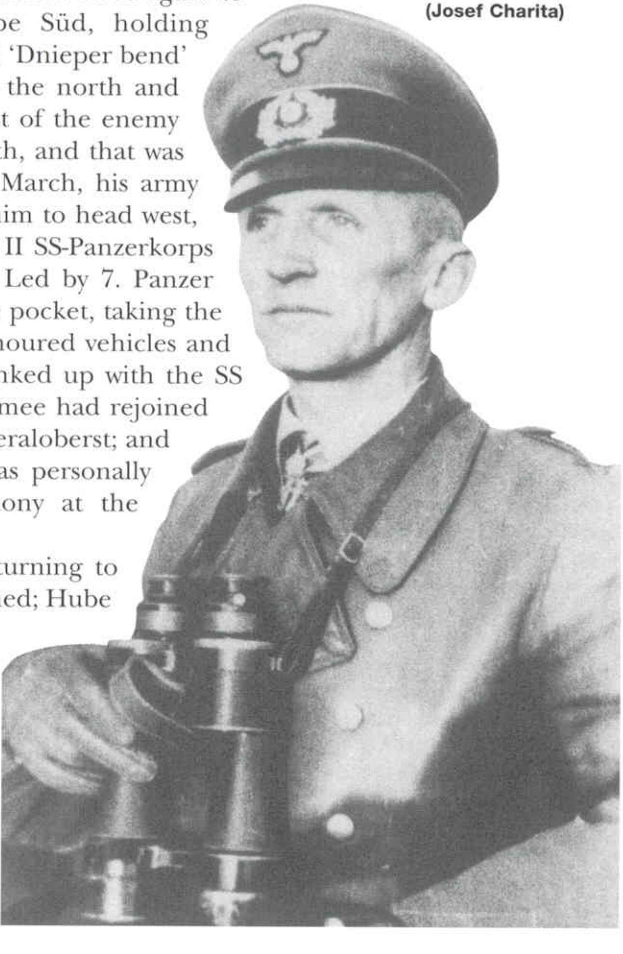
Hube did not see action during the Polish campaign, but in October 1939 was appointed to command Infanterie Regiment 3 with the rank of Oberst. He led this unit in the early weeks of the 1940 campaign in the West, and its performance brought him, in May, promotion to Generalmajor and command of 16. Infanterie Division (mot). Later that year his command was re-formed as 16. Panzer Division, and was sent in December to allied Romania as a demonstration unit. It served as part of Panzergruppe Kleist with Rundstedt's Heeresgruppe Süd during Operation 'Barbarossa' in June 1941.

Hube's division distinguished itself for aggression and spirit in the breaking of the so-called 'Stalin Line', and its commander was decorated with the Knight's Cross on 1 August 1941. In subsequent fighting in the Ukraine, 16. Panzer took part in the smashing of two entire Soviet armies around Kiev, bringing Hube the Oakleaves on 16 January 1942. On 16 September 1942, Hube was promoted Generalleutnant and given command of XIV Panzerkorps, then located in Stalingrad; and on 21 December he was awarded the Swords to his Knight's Cross. Refused permission to attempt a break-out from the winter siege, Hube resigned himself to a soldier's death alongside his men; but on 18 January 1943 he was ordered to fly out of the pocket and report to Führer Headquarters.

Hube was subsequently charged with forming a new XIV Panzerkorps to replace the formation lost at Stalingrad. This corps was then deployed in the defence of Sicily, where Hube was given command of all Army and Flak troops on the island. Promoted General der Panzertruppe, Hube made the Allies pay dearly for their advance across Sicily in July 1943; and despite their air and sea superiority, he subsequently organized the withdrawal of the surviving units across the straits to the Italian mainland with remarkable success. He repeated this stubborn defensive battle in September after the Salerno landings, but Allied airpower and naval gunfire support tipped the balance.

In November 1943, Hube was transferred eastwards once again to command 1. Panzerarmee with Heeresgruppe Süd, holding positions on the northern flank of the threatened 'Dnieper bend' salient. In March 1944 deep Soviet advances to the north and south encircled Hube's army nearly 50 miles east of the enemy front line. Hube wanted to break out to the south, and that was where the Red Army expected him; but on 26 March, his army group commander GFM von Manstein ordered him to head west, while Gen Raus's 4. Panzerarmee, reinforced by II SS-Panzerkorps rushed from France, pushed east to meet him. Led by 7. Panzer Division, Hube's army struck westwards out of the pocket, taking the enemy by surprise and destroying nearly 700 armoured vehicles and 200 artillery pieces. On 6 April his spearhead linked up with the SS Panzers, and by 9 April the whole of 1. Panzerarmee had rejoined safely. On 1 April 1944, Hube was promoted Generaloberst; and in recognition of this outstanding success he was personally awarded the Diamonds by Hitler in a ceremony at the Obersalzberg on 20 April.

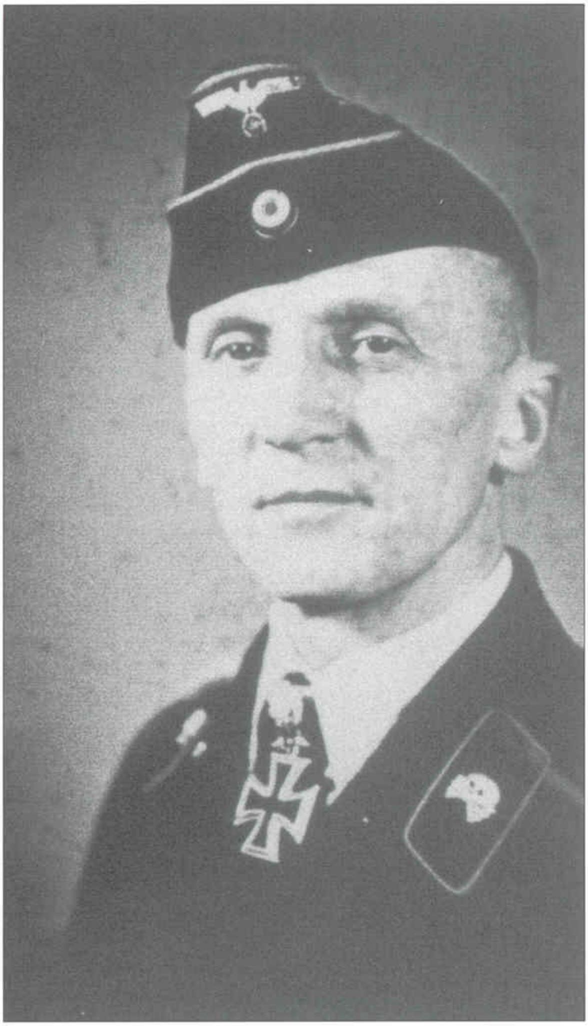
On the following day, 21 April, Hube was returning to Berlin in a Heinkel He 111 when the aircraft crashed; Hube was seriously injured, and died in hospital. He was buried with full military honours in the Invalidenfriedhof in Berlin.



Gen Hasso von Manteuffel, who showed heroism as an infantry officer before proving himself one of Germany's best Panzer generals. He is pictured in the leather greatcoat he often favoured, and the so-called 'old style officer's field cap'; the Oakleaves and Swords at his throat date the photo to after 2 February 1944, at which date GenLt von Manteuffel was commanding the Army's premier mechanized division, the 'Grossdeutschland'. (Josef Charita)

General der Panzertruppe Hasso von Manteuffel (Plate D2)

Hasso von Manteuffel was born in Potsdam on 14 January 1897, into a family with a centuries-long tradition of Prussian military service. In



This is one of the rare photos showing Manteuffel wearing the black 'special uniform' for tank crews. By regulation it was only to be worn when actually serving with armoured vehicles; it was intended that even crew members would wear the normal field-grey service uniform when on other duties or on leave. Nevertheless, it was occasionally worn by general officers to show their solidarity with the tank soldiers they commanded. In the original colour print of this photo it can be seen that GenLt von Manteuffel's black 'new style officer's field cap' is piped with gold cord on the crown seam and in the scalloped front of the flap. (Josef Charita)

1908 he joined the Kadetenanstalt (Cadet Institute) at Naumburg, moving to the Senior Cadet Institute in Berlin in 1911. He joined the Army officially in February 1916, as an officer candidate with Husaren Regiment 3 at Rathenow. Manteuffel served on both Eastern and Western Fronts during World War I; he was commissioned Leutnant in April 1916, and was wounded for the first time that October.

Like many of his contemporaries, Manteuffel served with the Freikorps in the immediate post-war period – in his case, as adjutant to Freikorps von Oven in Berlin – before joining the Reichswehr in May 1919. He served with Kavallerie Regiment 25 until 1920, when he joined Reiter Regiment 3; after three years as a squadron commander he became the regimental adjutant.

An accomplished horseman, Manteuffel won several sporting awards; and was promoted Rittmeister (Captain) with Reiter Regiment 17, a Bavarian unit. Promoted Major in 1936, he was appointed to the staff of 2. Panzer Division, and the following year to that of the Kommando der Panzertruppe – the office of Gen Guderian.

In February 1939 he was appointed to command Panzertruppe Schule II at Berlin-Krampnitz, and that April he was promoted Oberstleutnant. In this position, Manteuffel missed seeing action during the early campaigns of the war.

In May 1941, Manteuffel took command – at his own request – of II Btl, Jäger Regiment 7, a distinctly junior posting for an officer of his rank. Three months later, however, he took command of Jäger (Panzergrenadier) Regiment 6 when its commander was killed in action, and he led this unit of 7. Panzer Division during the opening phase of Operation 'Barbarossa'. The daring cavalryman gained a considerable reputation for dash and courage in these infantry battles. His troops entered Vyazma on the road to Moscow on 6 October, encircling a considerable number of enemy troops and resisting all their attempts to break out. In December, rifle in hand, the 44-year-old ObstLt Manteuffel personally led an attack which resulted in the capture of a bridge over the Volga-Moscow canal, and of the adjacent Yakhroma power station (which served the Kremlin). For his heroism he was decorated with the Knight's Cross on the last day of 1941, and promoted Oberst.

Manteuffel remained on the Eastern Front until May 1942, when his division was pulled back for rest and refitting in occupied France. Here Manteuffel remained until he was posted to North Africa in February 1943, to take command of an ad hoc division comprising a mix of German Army, Luftwaffe and Italian troops. This Division von Manteuffel, was involved in extremely heavy fighting in Tunisia as part of LXXXX Armeekorps. Manteuffel collapsed from exhaustion and became seriously ill; evacuated to a German hospital, he was promoted Generalmajor on 1 May 1943.

Three months later he was given command of his old 7. Panzer Division in Russia. On top form once again, Manteuffel led this division on the southern sector of the front, at first resisting the Soviet offensives which followed the fall of Stalingrad, including the defence of Kharkov, and then fighting in the Kursk offensive. During the defensive campaign which followed its failure 7. Panzer was moved back and forth from crisis point to crisis point, acting as a fire brigade. His capture of Zhitomir during a night attack brought Manteuffel the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross on 23 November 1943. In December 1943, Manteuffel was summoned to Hitler's headquarters, where he was honoured by being appointed to command the elite 'Grossdeutschland' Division, the Army's premier combat formation, with the rank of Generalleutnant. On 2 February 1944, Manteuffel was awarded the Swords to his Knight's Cross in recognition of his inspired command of 7. Panzer Division; at this date he was only the seventh divisional commander to be so decorated.

While fighting a series of desperate defensive battles Manteuffel oversaw the expansion of 'Grossdeutschland' from a mechanized infantry division into one of the most powerful Panzer divisions Germany possessed. He led his new command to great effect, often drawing the Soviets into rapid advances that exposed them to flanking attacks that cut off their forward elements. 'Grossdeutschland' saw intense combat at Korsun (Cherkassy) in February, losing much of its tank strength for months afterwards. In March–April 1944 the 'GD' was forced back into Romania, fighting around Jassy, and in May 1944 defeated an offensive that threatened the Romanian oilfields. In August the division was transferred north to the East Prussian/Latvian front. On 1 September 1944, Manteuffel was promoted to the rank of General der Panzertruppe, and appointed to command 5. Panzerarmee on the Western Front.

Manteuffel's welcome to the West involved immediate heavy combat in Lorraine, where his scratch force, hastily cobbled together and short of infantry and artillery, was committed to a counter-attack against Patton's US 3rd Army. During a four-day battle – which opened the eyes of Russian Front veterans to the very different capabilities of the US Army – Manteuffel's forces took a terrible pounding from Allied fighter-bombers and suffered heavy losses in armour. The 5. Panzerarmee was withdrawn to the woods of the Eifel sector, and rebuilt in preparation for the forthcoming Ardennes offensive.

Hitler's ill-conceived plan was to strike across the Meuse and onwards to the impossibly ambitious objective of Antwerp, cutting the Allied armies in two. The northern flank was formed by SS-Obstgruf 'Sepp' Dietrich's 6. SS-Panzerarmee; Gen Brandenberger's weak, mainly infantry 7. Armee operated on the southern flank, while Manteuffel's 5. Panzerarmee delivered the central thrust. All these commands were short of vital supplies, and manned by a mixture of half-trained boys and exhausted survivors of earlier defeats. When the advance began on 16 December the Americans were initially taken by surprise, and the parallel columns made reasonable progress; bad weather helped the attackers by grounding Allied air support. The German divisions were hampered by fuel shortages, however, and by the problems of moving large numbers of vehicles, including heavy tanks, along narrow, snowbound roads through difficult wooded terrain. The 7. Armee failed to take Bastogne, which later tied down considerable numbers of troops, including some of Manteuffel's armour; this significantly delayed his progress towards his own objectives. By 24 December the spearheads had advanced about 65 miles, but were still short of the River Meuse; and on that day the clearing weather allowed the Allies to begin employing their overwhelming air superiority. Rapidly running out of fuel and ammunition, the German divisions were forced first onto the defensive and, by 9 January, into general retreat.

On 18 February 1945, Manteuffel was decorated with the Diamonds to the Knight's Cross. He was appointed to command 3. Panzerarmee on the Eastern Front, defending positions in Pomerania; but the end was in sight, and his troops were pushed westwards towards Mecklenburg. Hitler had ordered him to strike towards Berlin and attempt to relieve the capital, but Manteuffel knew that this would be a futile gesture that would cost tens of thousands of his soldiers' lives. He negotiated the surrender of his forces to the British who were approaching Mecklenburg from the west.

Released after two years, in 1953 Manteuffel was elected to the Bundestag as a member of the Free Democratic Party, sitting as a member of parliament until 1957. Hasso von Manteuffel died on 24 September 1978 at the age of 81, deeply admired by the men he had led and respected by those he had fought against.

Gen Ludwig Crüwell, whose capture in October 1942 meant that he appears much less often in wartime photographs than many of his peers; he was, nevertheless, a senior and respected tank officer who would doubtless have been given even more senior commands if he had returned from Africa. This shot was taken in late 1941 after the award of his Oakleaves and appointment as commanding general of the *Afrikakorps*.

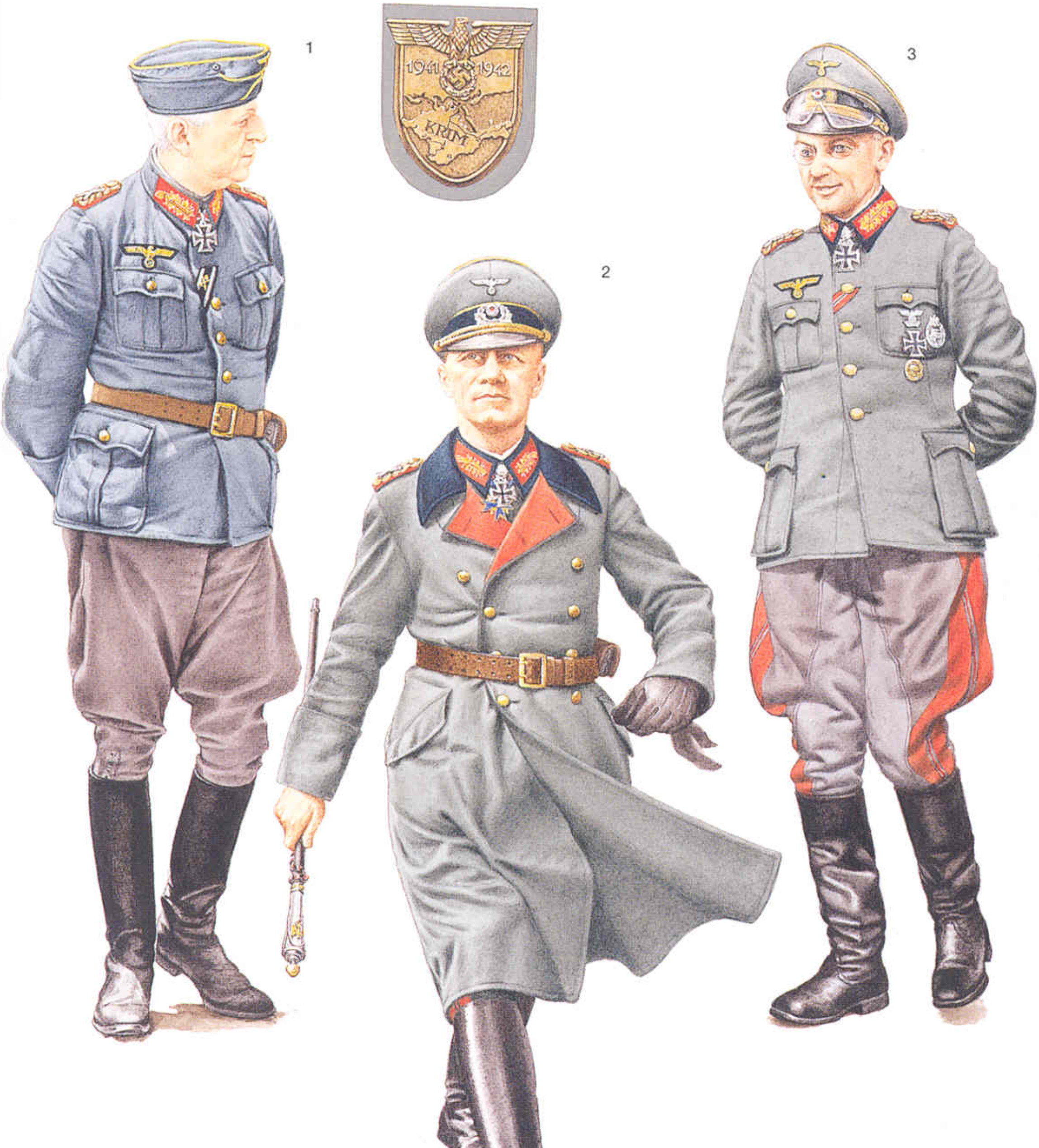
General der Panzertruppe Ludwig Crüwell (Plate D1)

Ludwig Crüwell was born on 20 March 1892 in Dortmund. In 1911 he became an officer candidate in a dragoon regiment, gaining his commission in August 1912. He was sent on temporary detachment to the Kriegsschule at Hersfeld before rejoining his unit, where he became regimental adjutant. He spent most of World War I with Dragoner Regiment 9, but with several periods of detachment, including a spell on the staff of 233. Infanterie Division and a brief command of an infantry company. He ended the war as an Oberleutnant on the staff of 33. Infanterie Division.

Crüwell returned to his old dragoon regiment in January 1919, and served on detachment to the Army General Staff. In October 1920 he transferred to the staff of 1. Kavallerie Division, and over the next two years alternated between service with mounted units and with the Defence Ministry; in May 1922 he was promoted Rittmeister (Captain). In October 1925 he joined 2. Kavallerie Division,

(continued on page 41)

1: GFM Erich von Manstein; Sebastopol, July 1942
2: GFM Erwin Rommel; French coast, spring 1944
3: GFM Walter Model; Holland, September 1944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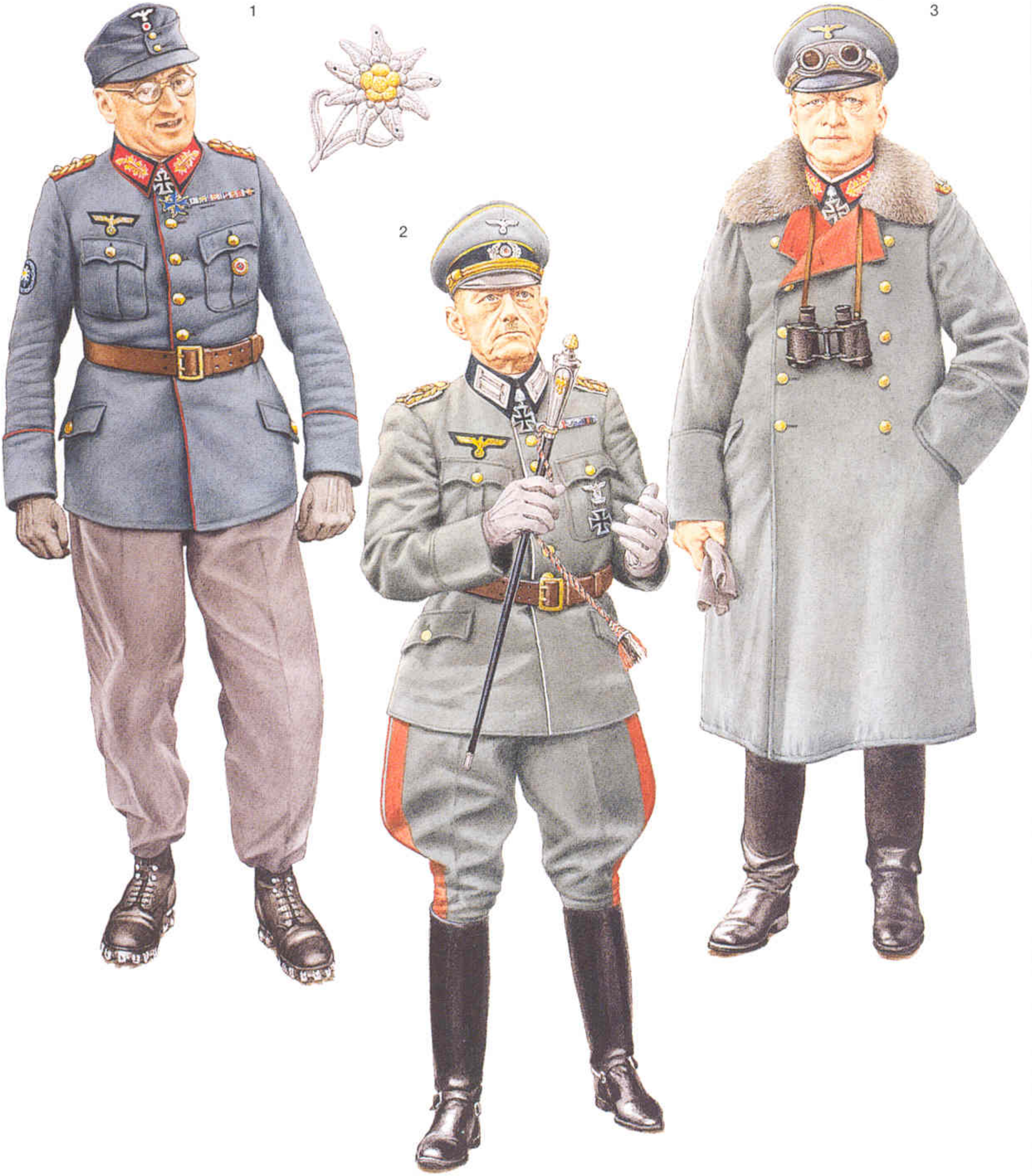
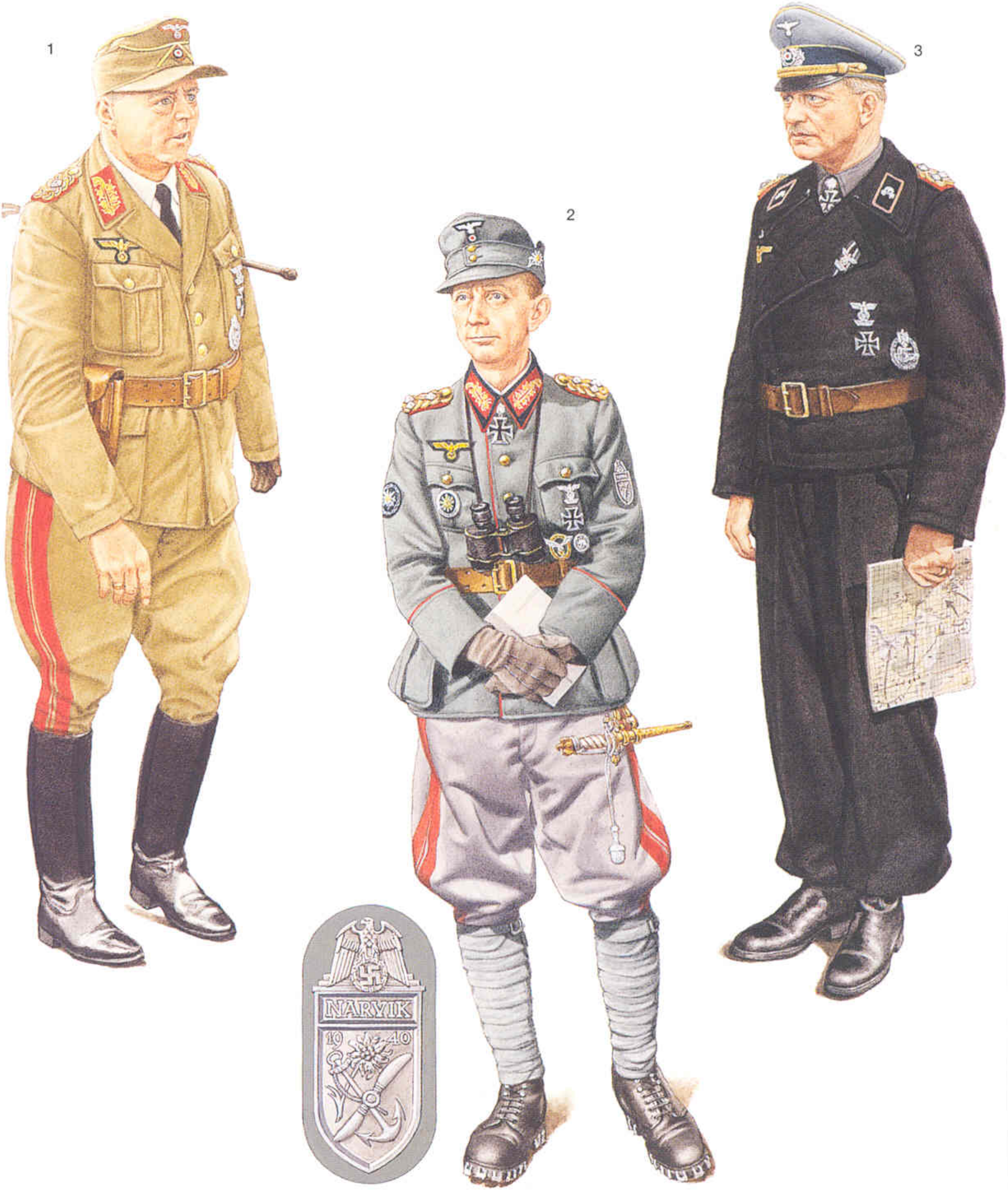
1: Gen Ferdinand Schörner; Finland, spring 1943
2: GFM Gerd von Rundstedt, autumn 1944
3: GFM Ewald von Kleist; Ukraine, spring 1943



B

1: GenLt Hans Hube; Sicily, August 1943
2: GenObst Eduard Dietl; Soviet/Finnish border, June 1942
3: GenObst Heinz Guderian, c.1943–44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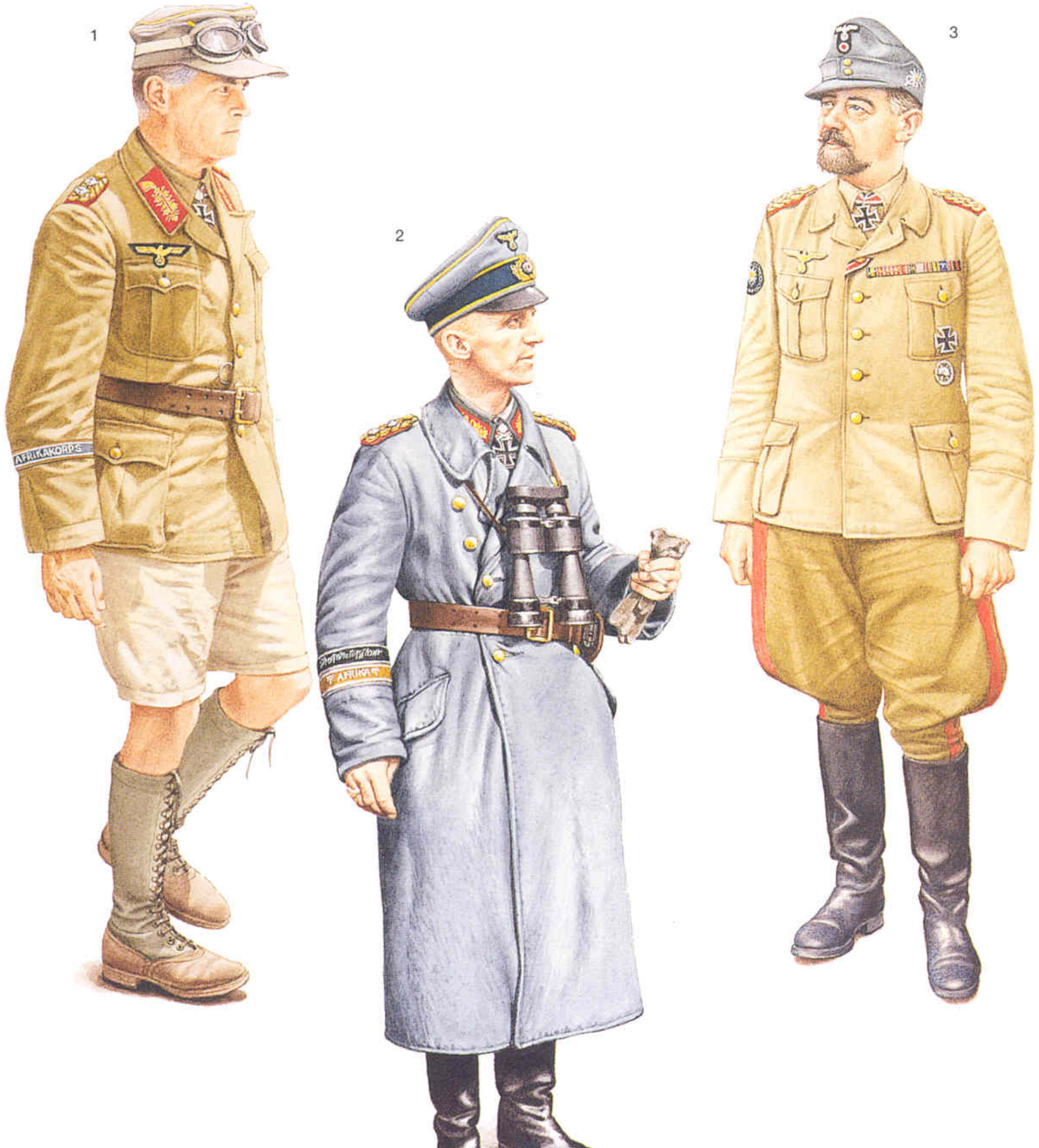
1: Gen Ludwig Crüwell; Libya, May 1942
2: Gen Hasso von Manteuffel; Ardennes, December 1944
3: GenMaj Julius Ringel; Crete, 1941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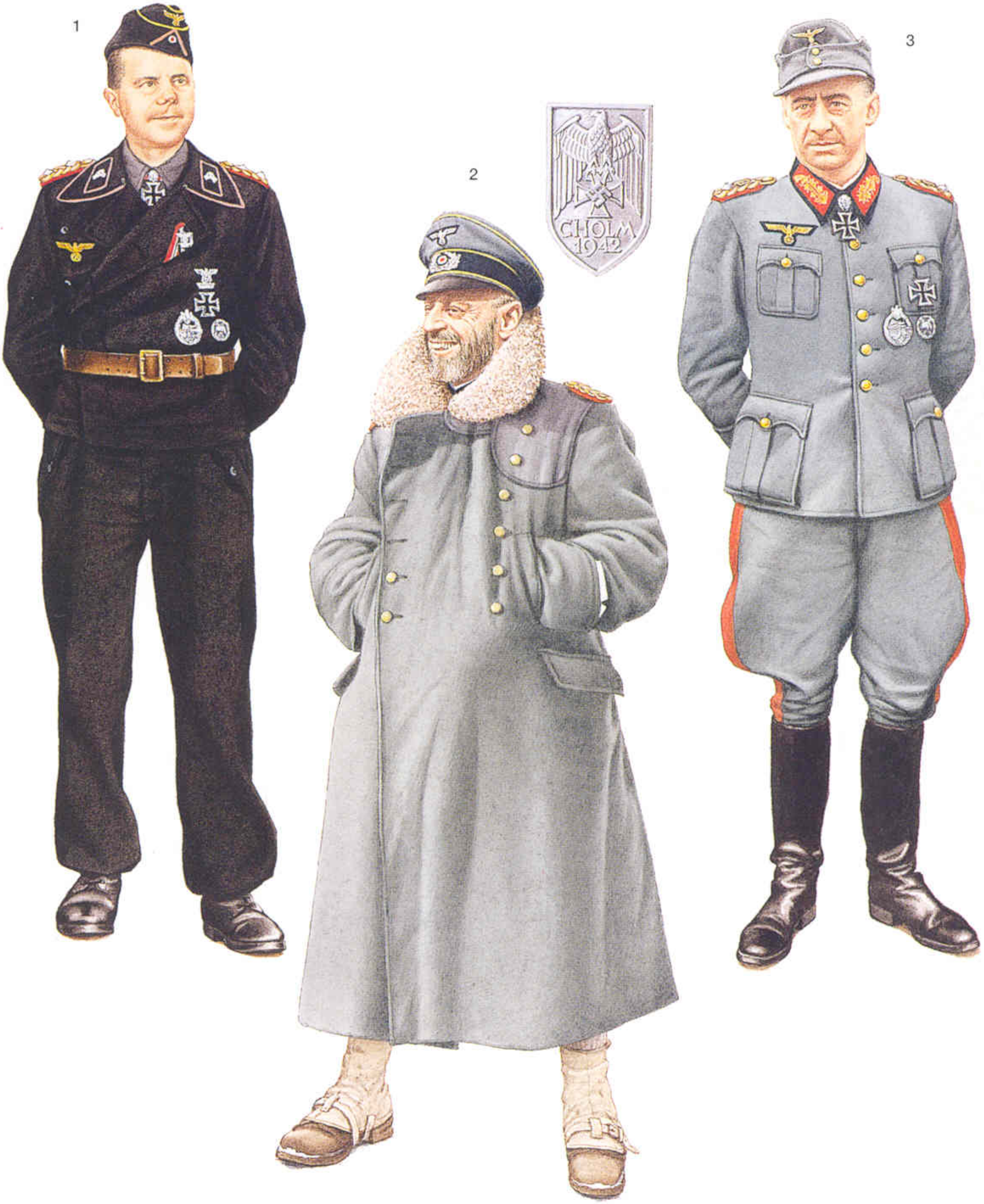
1: Gen Heinrich Eberbach; France, August 1944
2: GenMaj Theodor Scherer; Cholm, early 1942
3: GenLt Fritz Bayerlein; Normandy, June 1944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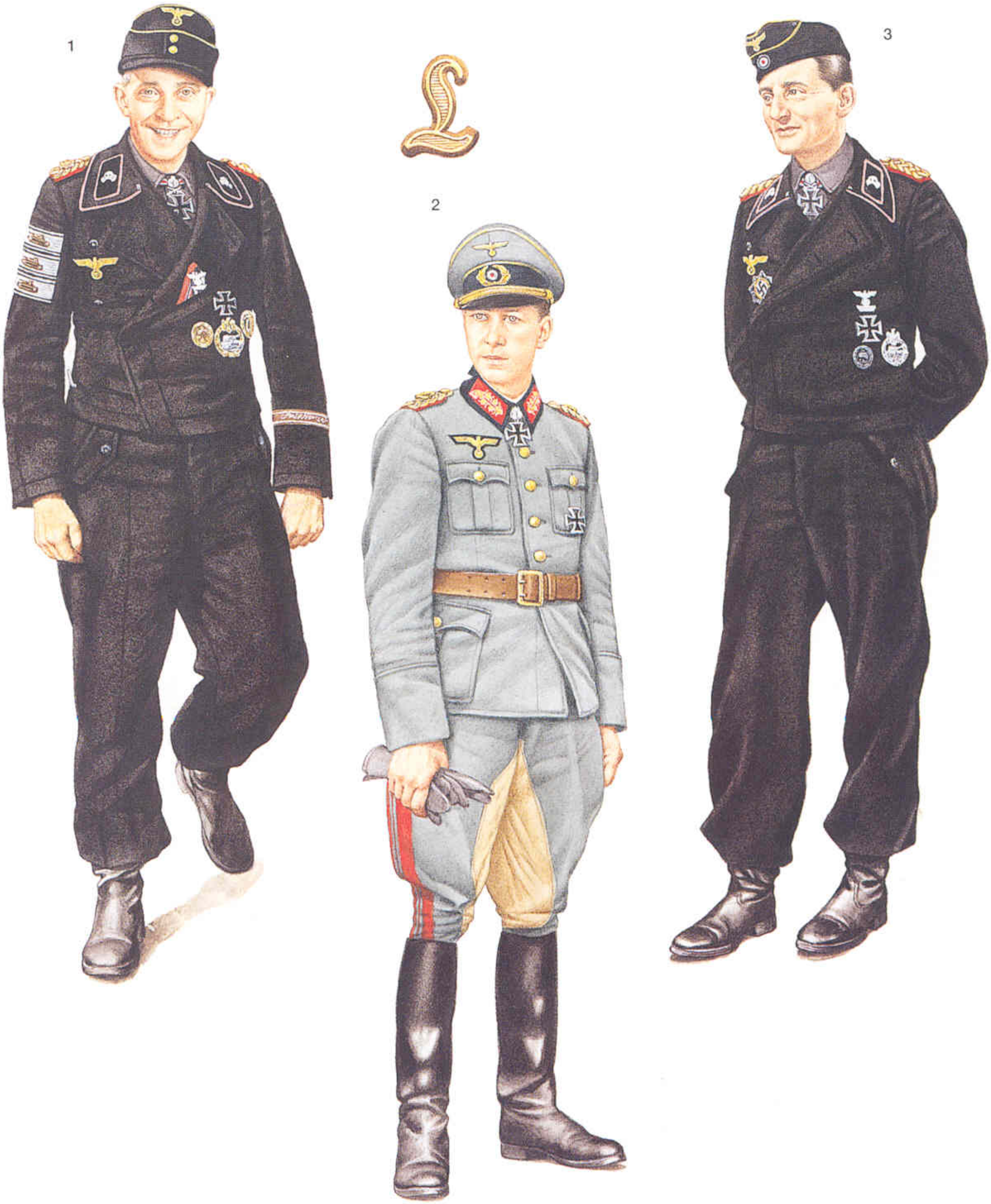
1: GenMaj Dr Franz Bäke; Eastern Front, April 1945
2: GenMaj Horst Niemack; Ruhr Pocket, March 1945
3: GenMaj Hermann von Oppeln-Bronikowski; Silesia, 1945



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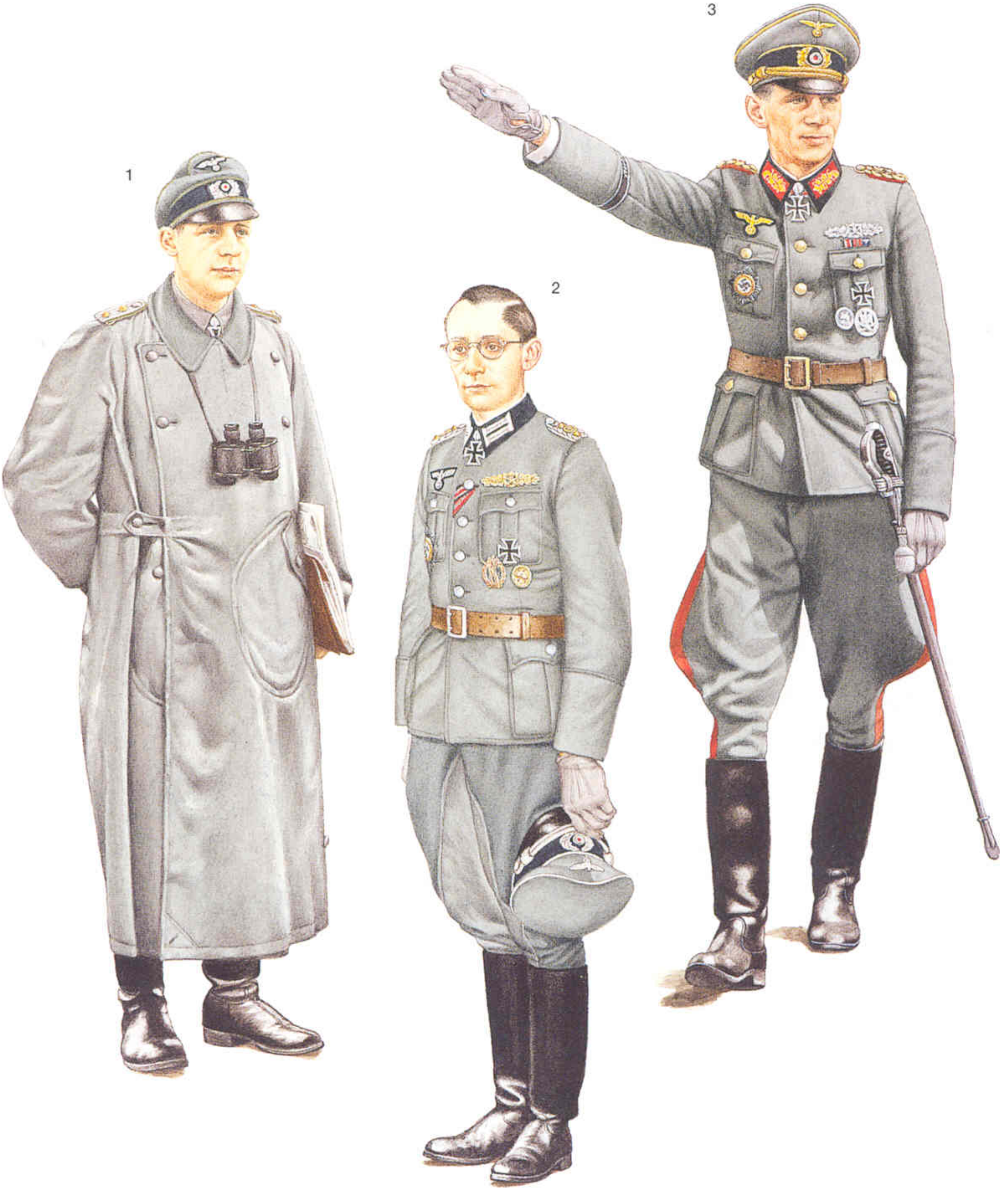
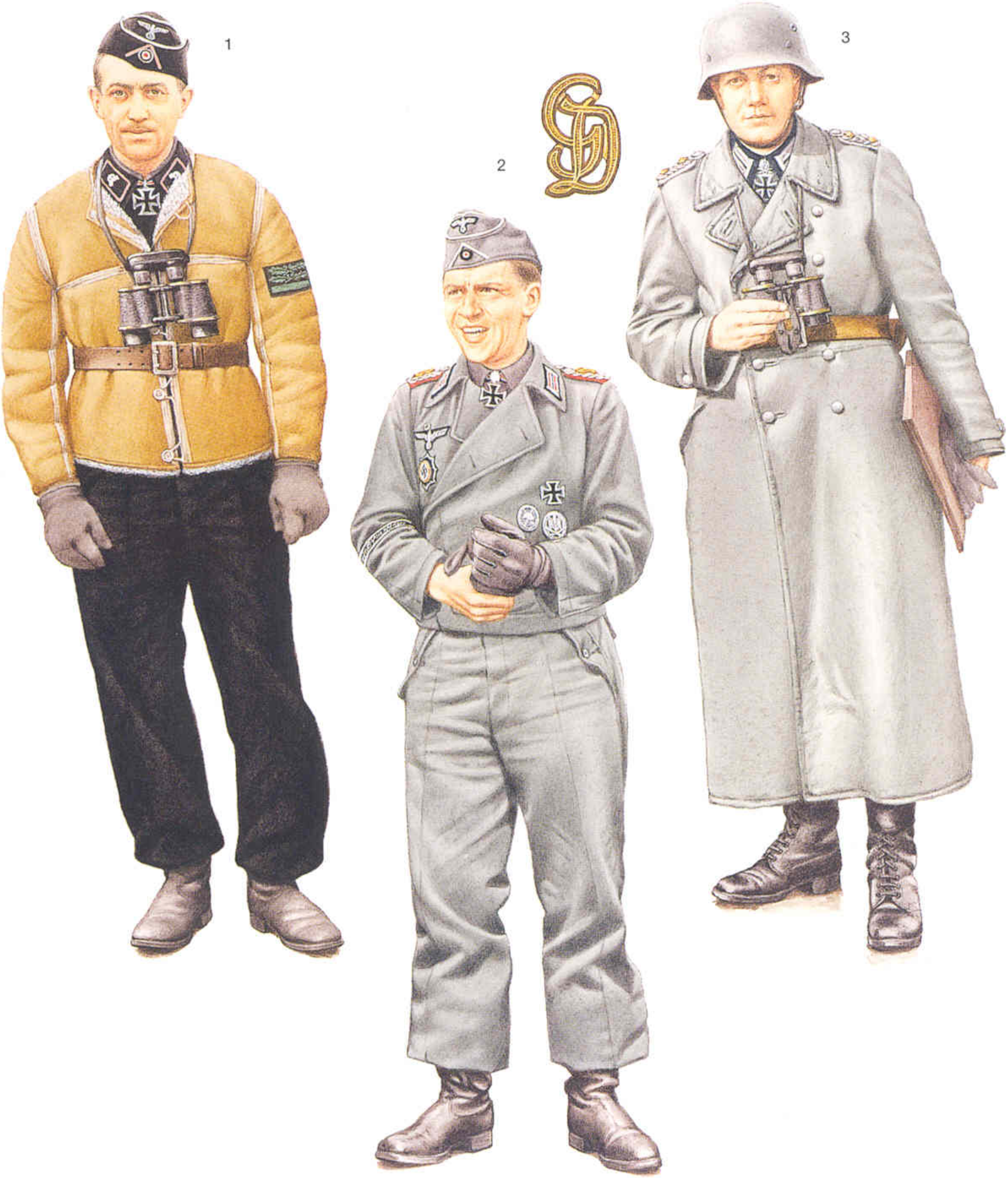
1: Hptm Waldemar von Gazen; Caucasus, January 1943
2: Obst Heinz von Brese-Winiary; Lithuania, September 1944
3: GenMaj Otto Remer; Eastern Front, spring 1945



1: Maj Willy Jähde; Leningrad front, March 1944
2: Maj Peter Frantz; Eastern Front, spring 1943
3: ObstLt Josef Bremm; Ruhr Pocket, spring 1945



and three years later 3. Kavallerie Division, being promoted Major on 1 October 1931. Further staff appointments included spells with the General Staff and the staff of the Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres, bringing promotion to Oberstleutnant on 1 April 1934 and to Oberst on 1 March 1936. For just two months from February 1938 Crüwell commanded Panzer Regiment 6, taking part in the occupation of Austria before returning to staff postings, ultimately with the Oberkommando des Heeres.

Shortly after the outbreak of war, Crüwell was appointed as chief quartermaster to 16. Armee, and on 1 December 1939 he was promoted Generalmajor. Assigned to 5. Panzer Division on 6 June 1940 on temporary attachment for one month, on 1 August he was finally given command of his own formation: 11. Panzer Division, the famous 'Ghost Division'. Crüwell led 11. Panzer during the spring 1941 Balkan campaign, spearheading the advance of XIV Panzerkorps into Yugoslavia; and on 14 May he was decorated with the Knight's Cross. His division remained with 1. Panzergruppe for the June attack on the Soviet Union, where it formed part of XXXXVIII Armeekorps in Heeresgruppe Süd. It took part in the drive through Zhitomir to Uman; by 8 August the latter had been taken, with over 100,000 prisoners from the 25 divisions that had made up the Soviet 6th and 12th Armies.

In September 1941, promoted Generalleutnant and decorated with the Oakleaves, Crüwell was appointed commanding general of the Deutsches Afrikakorps (15. & 21. Panzer Divisions) subordinate to Rommel's enlarged command, now designated Panzergruppe Afrika. Crüwell led the Afrikakorps through the battles around Tobruk, El Duda and Sidi Rezegh, which resulted in the destruction of much of the British 7th Armoured Division and the South African 5th Brigade.

Further promoted to General der Panzertruppe in December 1941, Crüwell was appointed commander of Panzergruppe Afrika in March 1942 – a temporary command while Rommel was on sick leave. By the time Rommel returned, Crüwell had contracted jaundice and was himself evacuated to Europe for treatment. Command of the DAK passed to GenLt Nehring; and when Crüwell eventually returned to Africa he was given command of the so-called 'Italian Front', which comprised four divisions of Italian troops and one of German.

This force was designated as Gruppe Crüwell for the assault on the British positions around Gazala in May 1942. On the 27th of that month the light aircraft in which he was a passenger was brought down by the British and Crüwell was taken prisoner. He remained in captivity until 1947, and died in retirement in Essen on 25 September 1958.

General der Panzertruppe Heinrich Eberbach (Plate E1)

Heinrich Kurt Alfons Willy Eberbach was born in Stuttgart on 24 November 1895. He joined the Army as a 19-year-old officer cadet in 1914, being commissioned Leutnant in an infantry regiment the next year. Not long after joining his unit at the front he was seriously wounded in the face, having part of his nose blown away, and was taken prisoner by the French. He was repatriated in 1916 due to his wounds; after undergoing plastic surgery he returned to military service in 1918.

Gen Heinrich Eberbach, seen here in the black uniform for tank crews, displaying his Knight's Cross with the Oakleaves suspension clasp awarded in December 1941, shortly before he took over 4. Panzer Division. The facial wound that Eberbach suffered during the early stages of World War I still leaves its mark. (Josef Charita)

Assigned as a liaison officer to the Turkish forces, he was captured once again, this time by the British. He was promoted Oberleutnant in October 1918 while in captivity.

After the war Eberbach joined the Police, serving until 1935 when, on 1 August, he returned to the Army in the rank of Major. A year later he was posted to Panzer Regiment 6, beginning his long association with the armoured troops. Promoted Oberstleutnant in October 1937, Eberbach went on to command Panzer Regiment 35 in 4. Panzer Division, with which he took part in the invasion of Poland. During the campaign in the West in June 1940 Eberbach seized the crossings of the River Seine near Romilly, and then captured the town itself, taking several thousand prisoners. In recognition of this feat Eberbach was decorated with the Knight's Cross on 4 July 1940, and promoted Oberst on 1 August.

Eberbach led his regiment through the opening phases of the invasion of the USSR, receiving the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross on 31 December 1941. Taking temporary command of 4. Panzer Division in January 1942, in March he was promoted to Generalmajor and confirmed as divisional commander. Subsequently assigned command of XXXXVIII Panzer Corps, Eberbach was wounded once more on 1 December 1942. During his convalescence he was promoted Generalleutnant in January 1943, and in August of that year to General der Panzertruppe. On returning to duty Eberbach held various staff postings until October 1943 when, over a three-month period, he commanded XXXXVII Panzer Corps, XXXXVIII Panzer Corps and then XXXX Panzer Corps on the Russian Front. In all these commands he showed great energy and skill.

With an Allied invasion of France imminent, Eberbach was transferred to the West and ultimately given command of the so-called 5. Panzerarmee in Normandy – with an actual strength of about 120 tanks, of a single division mixed with battered survivors of several other SS and Army formations. Eberbach's luck ran out on 31 August 1944, when he once again became a prisoner of the British. This time he was captured by 3rd Royal Tank Regiment, 11th Armoured Division, while on a reconnaissance near the River Seine.

Heinrich Eberbach died in retirement at Notzingen in July 1992.

DIVISIONAL COMMANDERS

General der Gebirgstruppe Julius Ringel (Plate D3)

Born at Völkermarkt in the mountainous Kärnten area of Austria on 16 November 1889, Julius Ringel became an officer cadet in the Austro-Hungarian Army in August 1909, and was commissioned Leutnant in

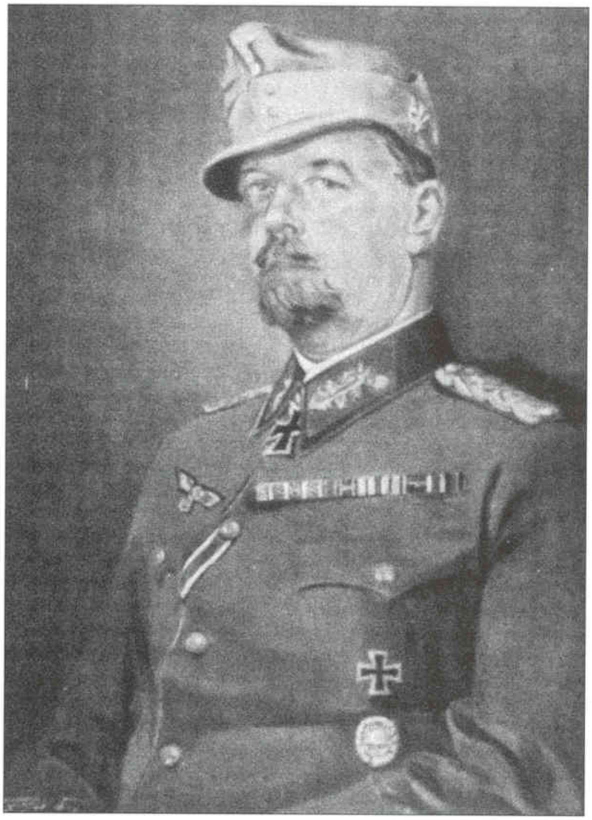
November 1910. He was promoted Oberleutnant in August 1914, days before the outbreak of World War I, and Hauptmann on 8 July 1917. After decorated combat service with the Tiroler Kaiser-Jäger during the war, Ringel rose steadily through the ranks of the post-war Austrian Army, to Major on 15 May 1921 and Oberstleutnant on 15 December 1932. Two years later he was appointed chief-of-staff of the Austrian 5. Gebirgs Brigade. After the Anschluss with Germany he was confirmed in his rank with the Wehrmacht in 1938, and appointed chief-of-staff of 3. Gebirgs Division.

In September 1939, Ringel moved from the mountain troops to the line infantry when he was promoted Oberst and became chief-of-staff of the Bavarian 268. Infanterie Division; a month later he was given his own command, Infanterie Regiment 266. In April 1940 he returned to the mountain troops, joining the newly formed 5. Gebirgs Division based at Salzburg; unlike Ringel, most of its soldiers were in fact Bavarians. In late 1940 Ringel was promoted Generalmajor and appointed to command the division.

After intensive training in the Bavarian Alps, where it formed part of 2. Armee on the home front, in March 1941 the division moved into the Balkans. Here it played a major role in breaking the Greek 'Metaxas Line' defences after four days of intensive fighting, fending off numerous enemy counter-attacks. Soon afterwards, Ringel's men were committed to one of the war's greatest gambles – the invasion of Crete.

Once again Ringel's mountain troopers played a pivotal role, coming to the assistance of the beleaguered paratroops during the fighting for Maleme airfield, the turning point of the whole battle. Many of the Gebirgsjäger were killed when a convoy of fishing vessels transporting them to the island was intercepted by the Royal Navy. A later landing, under fire, by Ju52 transport aircraft on Maleme airfield was successful, and between them the Fallschirmjäger and Gebirgsjäger drove the bulk of the British Commonwealth garrison from the island, the remainder surrendering on 31 May 1941. On 13 June 1941, Ringel was decorated with the Knight's Cross, and became for a time the military commander of Crete.

After a rest as occupation troops in Norway from September 1941, in January 1942 Ringel and his men were despatched to the Eastern Front to help stem the Soviet winter counter-offensive. The division fought under 18. Armee, in Heeresgruppe Nord, between Lake Ladoga and Novgorod on the Leningrad front. Ringel's Gebirgsjäger took part in the capture of over 33,000 prisoners in the Volkhov pocket, before being employed as a mobile 'fire brigade' at various crisis points on the Leningrad and Finnish fronts. During 20 months on the northern front Ringel's division gained an enviable reputation for steadfastness in defence and élan in the



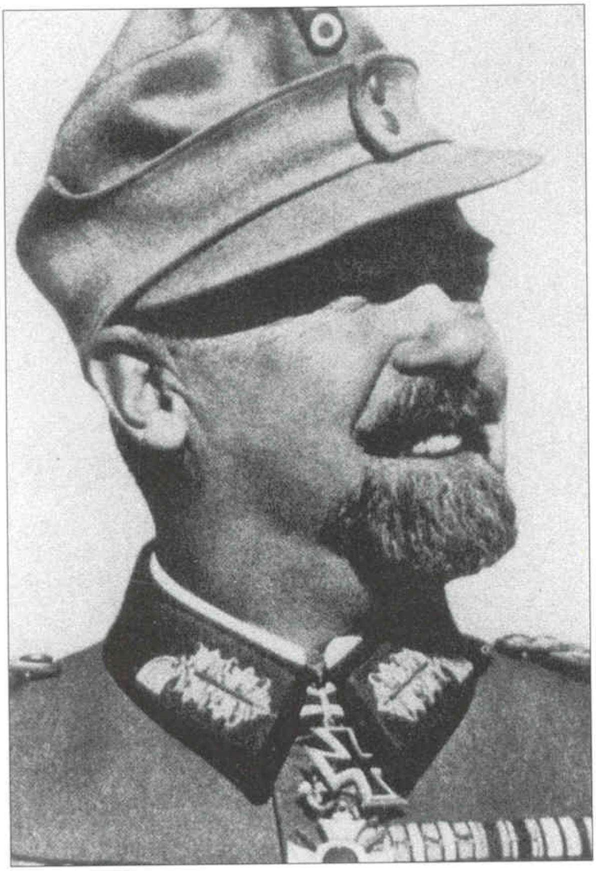
A formal portrait of the Austrian Mountain Troops general Julius Ringel, painted in oils. Although somewhat eclipsed by Dietl, he showed himself an extremely able commander on Crete, in Russia and in Italy; and the nickname 'Papa' Ringel given him by his men was a sign of real affection and trust. (Josef Charita)

attack. In recognition of the achievements of his division, Ringel was promoted Generalleutnant on 1 December 1942.

In mid-1943 the division were transferred to the Italian Front, taking part in the defensive fighting on the Gustav Line as part of 10. Armee. On 25 October 1943, Ringel was awarded the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross. His division took over the positions of the 305. Infanterie Division just before the first battle of Cassino in January 1944, and soon afterwards elements were sent to help resist the Allied landings at Anzio, before 5. Gebirgs pulled back to help defend the Gothic Line. Ringel was appointed to command LXIX Gebirgskorps in April 1944, moving briefly to take command of XVIII Gebirgskorps in June, when he was promoted to General der Gebirgstruppe. He left the front to become commanding general of Military District XVII (based at Salzburg) in late July 1944.

In February 1945 one of the ad hoc formations scrambled together in Austria in the face of the approaching Red Army was given the title Korps Ringel, and he helped organize the defence of the Steiermark region. In desperate fighting the various battlegroups formed by Ringel managed to halt – albeit temporarily – the Soviet advance. Despite the overwhelming superiority of the enemy, Ringel's determined Gebirgsjäger held their ground, and these hills remained in German hands until the last days of the war.

After the war Ringel lived in retirement, publishing in 1956 an account of his wartime experiences, *Hurra die Gams*. He died in Bavaria on 10 February 1967 at the age of 78.



As evidenced by his many medal ribbons, Ringel had enjoyed a long and successful career in the Austro-Hungarian and later Austrian armies before being taken into the Deutsches Heer after his country's annexation. The white-enamelled award worn below his Knight's Cross is the Bulgarian Order of St Alexander; his Austrian ribbons are the Order of the Iron Crown, Military Merit Medal (Silver & Bronze), Karl Troops Cross, and Tyrol Commemorative Medal 1914–18; his German medals are the Army Long Service, Austrian Anschluss 1938, Occupation of Czechoslovakia 1938, and Great War Cross of Honour – retrospectively awarded by Chancellor Hindenburg in 1934. (Josef Charita)

Generalleutnant Theodor Scherer (Plate E2)

Theodor Scherer was born on 17 September 1889 at Hoechstädt, Bavaria, the son of a schoolteacher. Joining Bavarian Infanterie Regiment 12 as an officer candidate, he was commissioned Leutnant in October 1910. Scherer served throughout World War I in machine gun detachments, ending the war as a Hauptmann. He joined the Bavarian Police, and spent 15 years as a police officer; he was an Oberstleutnant by 1935, when he rejoined the Army in that same rank. Scherer initially served on the staff of Infanterie Regiment 111; he was promoted Oberst in January 1937, and in April 1938 was given command of Infanterie Regiment 56 in Ulm. After two years Scherer was transferred to take command of the newly formed Infanterie Regiment 507, which he led throughout the campaign in the West and until September 1940. In November of that year he was promoted Generalmajor.

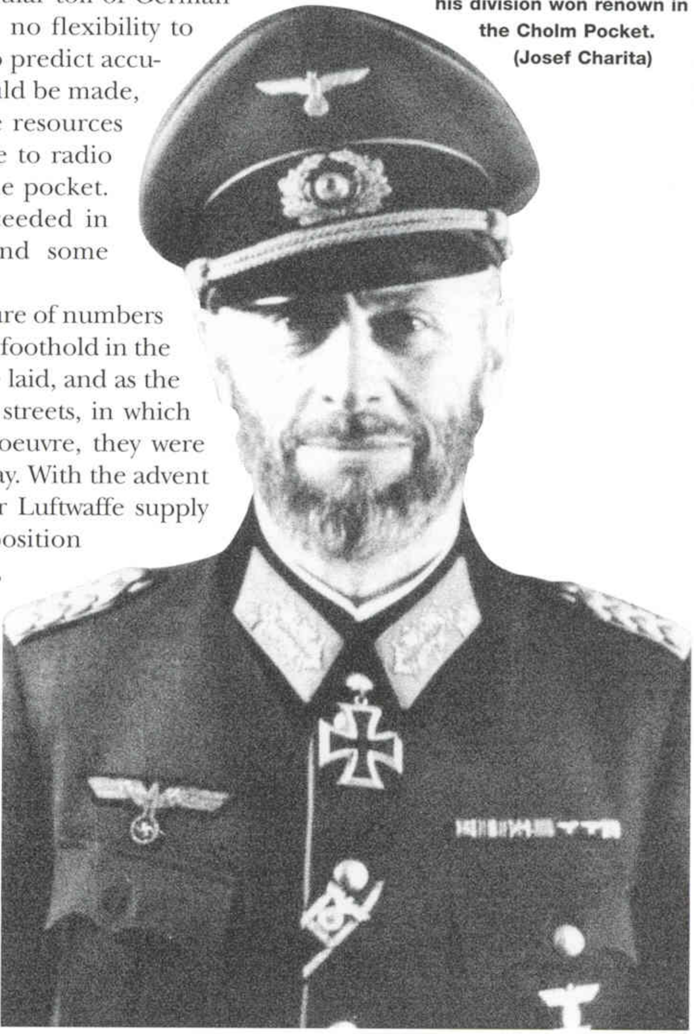
In October 1941, Scherer was chosen – no doubt because of his police experience – to take command of 281. Sicherungs Division. These 'security divisions' were not front line combat formations, but lightly equipped for ensuring the security of the areas behind the front, which were often infested with partisans and Red Army stragglers. Despite this modest divisional command, Scherer was destined to be in the right place at the right time to find fame, in one of the most dramatic actions of the winter 1941/42 crisis on the Eastern Front.

Cholm is a small town on the River Lovat, between Wilikije Luki and Demjansk, and one of the few areas of firm terrain in a region with more than its fair share of swampland. By January 1942 the region was under severe pressure from the Soviet counter-offensive; the area held by the Wehrmacht at Cholm was gradually compressed into a perimeter barely a mile across, and by 21 January the town was completely surrounded. Inside this 'cauldron' were a number of disparate units including elements of Infanterie Regiments 218 & 329, a battalion from a Luftwaffe field regiment, a Police Reserve battalion, transport units, and even some Navy personnel from river craft, plus Scherer's 281. Sicherungs Division headquarters: in all, around 5,500 men.

This 'Kampfgruppe Scherer' at first possessed no anti-tank guns; and artillery bombardments destroyed most of the houses, leaving the Germans without shelter in the bitter cold. The lack of cover was also important in that enemy snipers took a regular toll of German soldiers. Fortunately for Scherer, there was no flexibility to the enemy tactics; the Germans were able to predict accurately where and when each new assault would be made, allowing them to concentrate their meagre resources in that sector. Crucially, they were also able to radio for supporting artillery fire from outside the pocket. Eventually a flight of Ju52 transports succeeded in flying in a handful of anti-tank guns and some medical supplies.

As the siege wore on, overwhelming pressure of numbers allowed the Soviets to capture and maintain a foothold in the eastern outskirts of the town. Ambushes were laid, and as the Soviet troops advanced through the narrow streets, in which their supporting tanks were unable to manoeuvre, they were scythed down or forced to withdraw in disarray. With the advent of better weather in the early spring further Luftwaffe supply missions were mounted, although the position remained precarious. Finally, on 5 May 1942, supported by a massive artillery barrage and Stuka dive-bombers, a relief force broke through to the garrison, which by then numbered only 1,200 men still fit for action. For 107 days Scherer's troops had held off all enemy attempts to sieze the town, although the Red Army had launched almost 2,000 individual assault actions during the siege. On 1 July 1942 a special 'battle shield' award was instituted for veterans of the battle to display on their left sleeve.

For this achievement, Scherer was decorated with the Knight's Cross on 20



Facial hair was usually restricted to moustaches. While 'Papa' Ringel's neat beard was the kind of dandified affectation tolerated in an admired officer from a non-German military tradition, they were normally only allowed in the German Army to disguise disfiguring facial wounds. Theodor Scherer – shown here in the uniform of a Generalmajor after the award of the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross – was for a time an exception to this rule, but such portraits date from the harsh Russian winter of 1941/42 when his division won renown in the Cholm Pocket. (Josef Charita)

February 1942, and on 5 May with the Oakleaves. In September 1942 he was appointed to command 34. Infanterie Division, and two months later was promoted to Generalleutnant. His new division fought in Heeresgruppe Mitte's defensive battles during 1942–43, at Kharkov in January 1943 and particularly well in the third battle for that city in August 1943. After the spring 1944 retreat across the northern Ukraine, by July it was good for nothing but transfer to a rear area behind the Italian front.

In April 1944, GenLt Scherer had been appointed to the rather unglamorous role of inspector of coastal defences on the Eastern Front. The final ignominy came in late 1944, when his C-in-C GenObst Schörner posted Scherer back to Germany with the comment that he had 'no further use for him and his staff within my sector'.

Theodor Scherer survived the war, but was killed in an accident at Ludwigsburg in May 1951.

This later photo of the gaunt-featured Scherer, clean-shaven this time, shows him wearing on his left sleeve the Cholm Shield created as a campaign award for the personnel who held – or landed aircraft to supply – that surrounded position. It is also interesting to note that he wears the Wound Badge in both its 1918 Imperial and 1939 versions, side by side. It was much more common for servicemen to 'consolidate' their total number of wounds into the relevant class of the World War II award. (Josef Charita)

Generalleutnant Fritz Bayerlein (Plate E3)

Fritz Hermann Michael Bayerlein was born on 14 January 1899 in Würzburg. In June 1917 he joined Infanterie Regiment 9 as an officer cadet; however, the war ended before he was comissioned. He became a Leutnant in January 1922, after nearly three years in the ranks of the Reichswehr; thereafter he gradually progressed through the ranks, reaching Major in June 1938.

In April 1939 Bayerlein was assigned to the staff of 10. Panzer Division, with which he served during the Polish campaign. Throughout 1940 and most of 1941 Bayerlein held various staff positions, being promoted Oberstleutnant. His next major posting was as chief-of-staff to the Deutsches Afrikakorps in October 1941. Bayerlein was decorated with the Knight's Cross on 26 December 1941.

In April 1942 Bayerlein was promoted Oberst. During the period when Gen Nehring was recovering from wounds received at Alam Halfa in August 1942, Bayerlein briefly held command of the DAK. When Gen von Thoma was captured at El Alamein on 4 November, Bayerlein once again resumed control of the Afrikakorps during the subsequent retreat. On 7 December 1942, Obst Bayerlein was appointed chief-of-staff to Panzerarmee Afrika. On 1 March 1943, he was promoted Generalmajor; but like Rommel – whose loyal admirer he was – Bayerlein was by now in poor health. He developed rheumatism and hepatitis, and was evacuated from North Africa on 7 May 1943 just before the final surrender. On 6 July 1943, Bayerlein was decorated with the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross.

From October 1943 to January 1944, Bayerlein commanded 3. Panzer Division, serving under Guderian on the Eastern Front. In January 1944 he took command of the elite Panzer Lehr Division, many of whose

personnel were highly experienced soldiers who had served as instructors. Bayerlein's appointment to this command was apparently on the personal recommendation of Guderian, and was a tribute to his outstanding abilities. On 1 May 1944, Bayerlein was promoted Generalleutnant.

Panzer Lehr saw heavy combat in Normandy, but under conditions which prevented Bayerlein or his division from fulfilling their potential. Even before being committed to the fighting around Caen on 8 June it had suffered badly from Allied air attacks en route, during one of which Bayerlein himself was wounded, but he led his division into battle the next day. The German armoured reserves in Normandy were greatly handicapped by a muddled chain of command and contradictory orders. After some initial successes Panzer Lehr was unable to throw back the British units it faced, which were supported by heavy naval gunfire. For several days the division held off repeated attacks, suffering heavy attrition in the process. Bayerlein was decorated with the Swords to his Knight's Cross on 20 July 1944. Five days later his division's area suffered 'carpet bombing' by the USAAF of such devastating effect that up to 70 per cent of its strength was destroyed. The remnant was committed to the failed Mortain–Avranches counter-attack in early August.

Gradually withdrawing over the Seine, the survivors of Panzer Lehr returned to Germany, where the division was rebuilt during October 1944. The renewed division fought at Bastogne during the Ardennes offensive in December, before being committed to the defence of the Ruhr the following spring; it was finally surrounded in the Ruhr Pocket. In late March 1945, Bayerlein was appointed to command LIII Armeekorps, and was forced to surrender to US forces on 16 April.

LEFT **Fritz Bayerlein, shown here in a photo from early 1942 as an Oberstleutnant, in tropical service dress, wearing the Knight's Cross he was awarded in December 1941 for his very able work as chief-of-staff to the *Afrikakorps* under Rommel's command.**

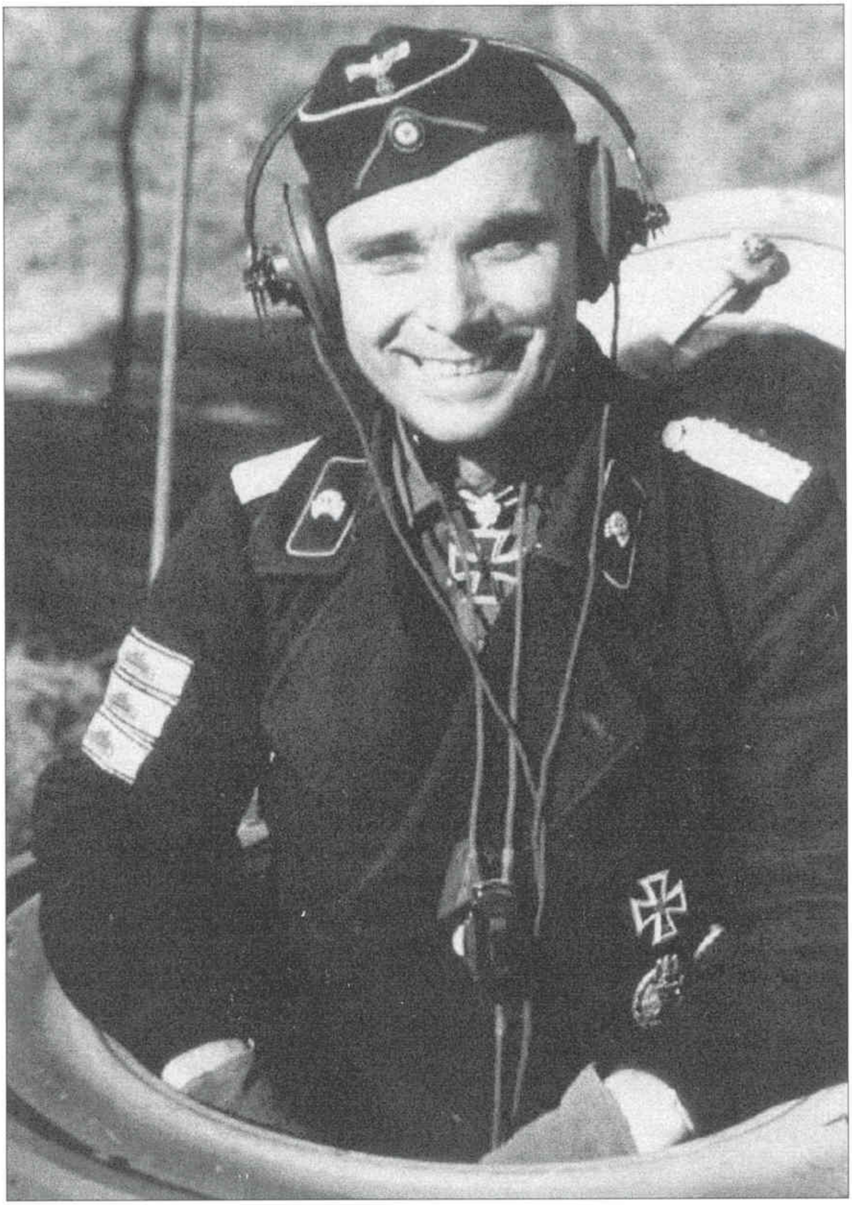
ABOVE **Bayerlein, now a Generalmajor, wears the Oakleaves and Swords, the latter awarded on 20 July 1944. Although now leading the Panzer Lehr Division in France he still wears the lightweight tropical tunic. Illness and unremitting hard service on two failing fronts have aged him visibly in two-and-a-half years. (Josef Charita)**

Held prisoner until April 1947, Bayerlein retired to his home in Würzburg. He died in January 1970.

Generalmajor Dr Franz Bäke (Plate F1)

Franz Bäke was born at Schwarzenfels on 28 February 1898, and while still a teenager was decorated for gallantry in World War I. After serving in the Reichswehr as an NCO he was commissioned Leutnant in December 1937, and promoted Oberleutnant in November 1939 while serving with Panzer Abteilung 65. In May 1941, serving with Panzer Regiment 11 in 6. Panzer Division, he was promoted to Hauptmann.

The 6. Panzer was soon advancing deep into Russia; the armoured regiment's ageing Skoda PzKw 35(t) tanks reached the outskirts of Leningrad, before being shifted south in September to join the push on



ObstLt Dr Franz Bäke, seen here in the turret cupola of a Tiger tank; the remnant of the Tiger battalion sPzAbt 503 formed part of his powerful Kampfgruppe in early 1944. On the right sleeve of his black Panzer vehicle uniform he displays three Tank Destruction badges, each awarded for the single-handed destruction of an enemy tank with hand-held weapons.

Moscow. It suffered severe losses during the Soviet winter counter-offensive; in December 1941 Bäke rose to command I Btl of his regiment, moving to II Btl in April 1942, when it was withdrawn to France for rebuilding. That August he was promoted to Major; and Bäke continued to prove himself a first class battalion commander after returning to Russia in November 1942, when 6. Panzer Division formed part of 4. Panzerarmee in the vain attempt to relieve Stalingrad. Major Bäke was awarded the Knight's Cross on 11 January 1943; the Oakleaves were added on 1 August 1943, after he showed great gallantry at Kursk, where his regiment fought in the southern pincer of the offensive. It was in this campaign that he personally knocked out three Russian tanks with hand-held weapons while dismounted from his tank.

Bäke was promoted Oberstleutnant in November 1943, subsequently taking command of Panzer Regiment 11. During the defensive fighting of late 1943 and early 1944 he showed intiative and determination at the head of an ad hoc regimental group comprising a PzKw V Panther battalion, some SP guns and engineers, and the remaining few PzKw VI Tigers of sPzAbt 503. In one five-day action in the 'Balabanovka Pocket' they destroyed 267 Soviet AFVs for the loss of one Tiger and four Panthers; ObstLt Bäke received the Swords to the Knight's Cross on 21 February 1944, the award being personally presented by Hitler. Bäke was promoted Oberst in May 1944; and on 3 July that year he was given command of Panzerbrigade 106 'Feldherrnhalle'.

On 9 March 1945, he took command of the so-called Panzer Division 'Feldherrnhalle 2', a makeshift formation cobbled together from the remnants of 13. Panzer Division and 60. Panzergrenadier Division 'Feldherrnhalle', both of which had been virtually wiped out defending Budapest that January. Bäke was promoted to the rank of Generalmajor on 20 April 1945, leading his command on the collapsing Hungarian/Czechoslovakian/Austrian front.

This remarkable officer survived the war, to die in an automobile accident at Hagen on 12 December 1978.

Generalmajor Horst Niemack (Plate F2)

Horst Niemack was born in Hannover on 10 March 1909. He joined the Reichswehr in 1927 as an officer cadet and was commissioned Leutnant in 1931. Serving with Reiter Regiment 18, Niemack became an accomplished horseman, and took part in many equestrian competitions. He later served as an instructor at the Kavallerieschule, finally transferring to a reconnaissance unit, Divisions Aufklärungsabteilung 5, in October 1939. He commanded this unit through the Western campaign; it was the first to reach the River Marne, an achievement which brought Rittmeister Niemack the Knight's Cross on 13 July 1940.

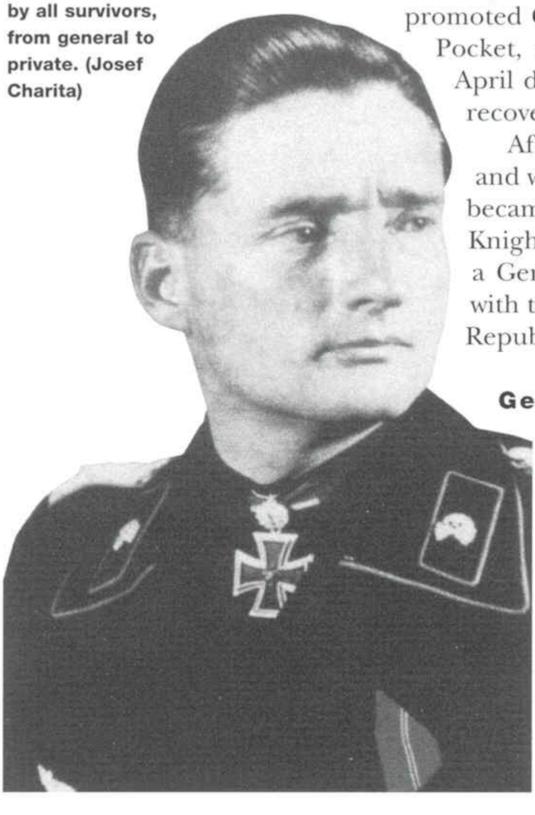
Major Horst Niemack, a distinguished cavalry officer and prize-winning horseman, seen here shortly after the award of the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross in August 1941. The decoration in this case recognized considerable personal gallantry in action as well as skilled leadership of his armoured reconnaissance battalion during the invasion of Russia.

At the beginning of Operation 'Barbarossa', Niemack's unit struck out towards Orla, where the Soviets were thrown back with heavy losses. Niemack continued to pursue the enemy, cutting their main route of retreat. Here his battalion's anti-tank guns and light artillery denied passage along the road for fully five days, and Niemack's troopers fought off several desperate attacks. In recognition of this feat, during which he was seriously wounded, Major Niemack was awarded the Oakleaves on 10 August 1941.

Niemack served as commander of the cavalry section of the school for mobile troops at Potsdam-Krampnitz while recovering from his wounds. He returned to combat duties with Panzergrenadier Regiment 26, 24. Panzer Division, in February 1943 with the rank of Oberstleutnant. In mid-October he took command of Fusilier Regiment 'Grossdeutschland', one of that crack division's two mechanized infantry regiments; from May 1944 it took the prefix 'Panzer' when it was completely equipped with armoured half-tracks. Niemack led his new unit in many hard-fought actions, which often came down to hand-to-hand combat; and on 4 June 1944 he was decorated with the Swords to the Knight's Cross for his regiment's part in successful attacks north of Jassy in Romania. In late August, Niemack's command half-track received a direct hit; he was dragged from the blazing wreckage at the last moment, and immediately evacuated to a Berlin hospital, where surgeons only narrowly avoided having to amputate his left arm.

Niemack returned to duty in January 1945, taking over command of the Panzer Lehr Division from Gen Bayerlein in the rank of Oberst on 5 February (a month short of his 36th birthday), and was subsequently promoted Generalmajor. He was involved in the battles in the Ruhr Pocket, until severely wounded once again at Winterburg on 2 April during fighting against the US 9th Division. Niemack was recovering in hospital when the war ended.

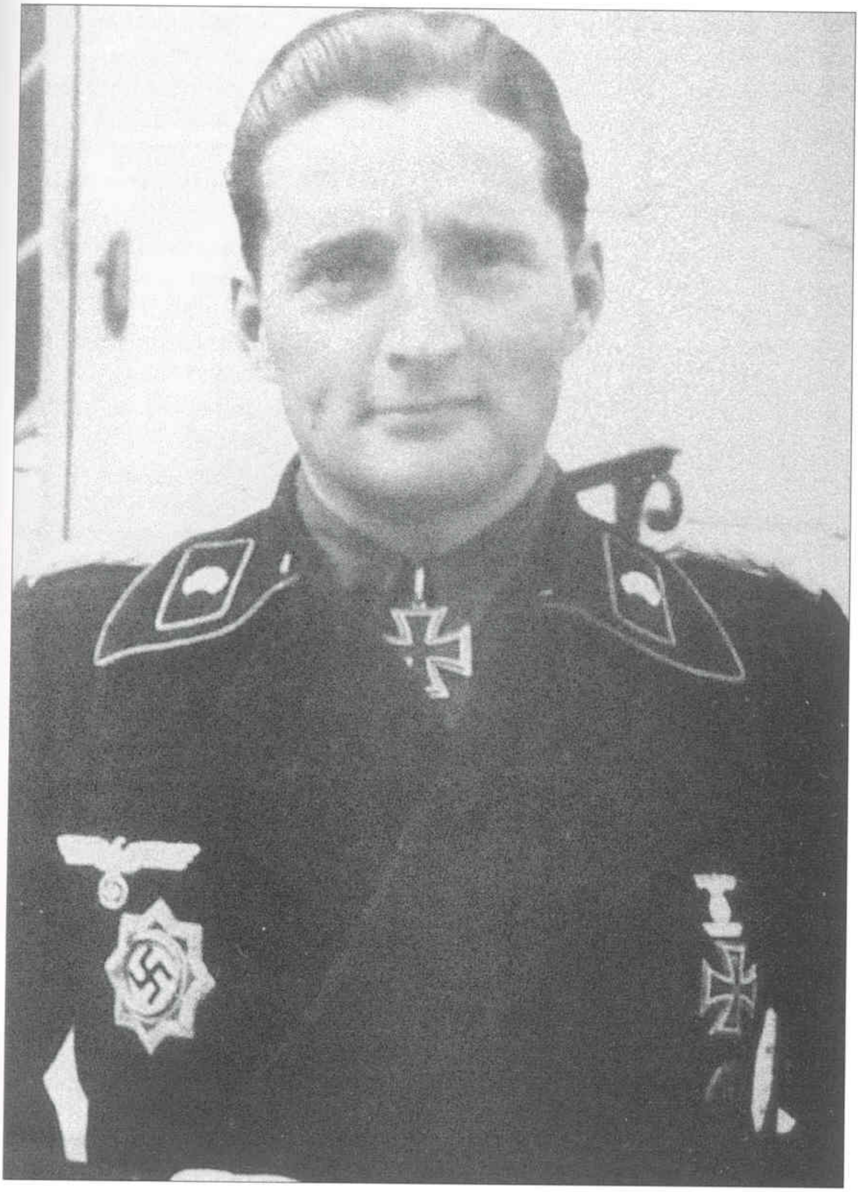
After the war he resumed his passion for equestrian sports, and was chairman of the German Olympic Committee. He also became the President of the Association of Holders of the Knight's Cross in 1954; and served in the West German Army as a Generalmajor of armoured troops. Niemack was decorated with the Grand Cross of the Merit Cross of the Federal German Republic. He died in April 1992 in Hannover.



Oberst von Oppeln-Bronikowski, displaying the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross, awarded on 28 July 1944 for the stubborn – though doomed – resistance of his 21. Pz Div in Normandy. Note that he also wears in his lapel buttonhole the ribbon of the campaign medal for the first winter on the Eastern Front; this reminder of the grim *'Winterschlacht 1941/42'* was proudly worn thereafter by all survivors, from general to private. (Josef Charita)

Generalmajor Hermann von Oppeln-Bronikowski (Plate F3)

Born in Berlin in 1899, Oppeln-Bronikowski was a Prussian aristocrat. Volunteering for Uhlan Regiment 10 in 1916, he served during the second half of World War I as a Leutnant platoon commander in Infanterie Regiment 118, winning the Iron Cross 1st Class. After the war he returned to the 10th Cavalry of the Reichswehr, and – like Hasso von Manteuffel and Horst Niemack – made a name for himself as a competition horseman; he represented his country at the 1936 Olympic Games, winning a Gold Medal in the dressage event. Progressing through the ranks, by the outbreak of war in 1939



Maj Hermann von Oppeln-Bronikowski; as well as the Knight's Cross, he wears the German Cross in Gold on his right breast. Like Niemack a keen equestrian, Oppeln-Bronikowski was also an Olympic Gold Medallist. (Josef Charita)

Oppeln-Bronikowski was a Major commanding the reconnaissance battalion of 24. Infanterie Division.

He served with this unit during the Polish campaign, winning the 1939 clasp to his 1914 Iron Cross; and subsequently was appointed to the staff of Oberkommando des Heeres in 1940. In this appointment he gained valuable knowledge and experience during the campaign in the West. Promoted Oberstleutnant on 1 August 1940, Oppeln-Bronikowski remained with the OKH; his specialist area was the conversion of traditional cavalry into armoured reconnaissance units. After again missing front line service in the Balkan campaign and the early phases of the invasion of the USSR, ObstLt Oppeln-Bronikowski was finally assigned to a combat unit in October 1941 when he joined the staff of 4. Panzer Division, briefly commanding Panzer Regiment 35 in succession to Obst Eberbach in January 1942.

In February 1942 he was promoted Oberst, and took command of Panzer Regiment 204 in 22. Panzer Division on the southern sector of the Russian Front. Mauled at Parpach in March, the division went on to fight extremely effectively on the Kerch Peninsula in May. It advanced to the Don, fighting at Rostov in July, and Oppeln-Bronikowski's tanks accounted for at least 500 Soviet AFVs – an achievement which retrospectively brought him the Knight's Cross in January 1943. By that time, however, 22. Panzer – part of XLVIII Panzerkorps – had been reduced to a wreck during the failed attempts in November-December 1942 to prevent the encirclement of 6. Armee at Stalingrad.

Transferred to command Panzer Regiment 11 in 6. Panzer Division, Oppeln-Bronikowski took part in the ill-fated offensive at Kursk. During the huge tank battle at Prokhorovka, Oppeln-Bronikowski and other officers holding a field conference were mistakenly bombed by Luftwaffe aircraft, and he was seriously wounded. On his recovery he was appointed commander of Panzer Regiment 22 in 21. Panzer Division in France. Destroyed in Tunisia, the division still had a number of Afrikakorps veterans, but had only one battalion of PzKw IV tanks and two dozen ancient French Somuas.

When the Allies landed on 6 June 1944, Oppeln-Bronikowski was ordered to attack immediately in an attempt to destroy the Normandy beachheads. As is notorious, the delays due to a dysfunctional chain of command, and the Allies' total air superiority, robbed the German armoured reserve of their brief chance of achieving this. Panzer Regiment 22 suffered numerous attacks from Allied fighter-bombers on its way towards the British 'Sword' beachhead, before becoming embroiled in furious fighting at Ranville and Caen. On 28 July 1944, Oppeln-Bronikowski received the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross in recognition of his men's efforts: they had held their positions for over 30 days under severe pressure, at the cost of at least 50 per cent of their armour. Subsequently the remnants of 21. Panzer were fortunate to avoid annihilation in the Falaise Pocket.

In January 1945, Oppeln-Bronikowski was promoted Generalmajor, with command of 20 Panzer Division. He saw action in Silesia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Austria, where his division was steadily destroyed in desperate defensive actions. In April 1945 GenMaj Oppeln-Bronikowski was awarded the Swords to his Knight's Cross. He finally disbanded the remnants of his division in the area around Dresden on 8 May 1945, and was captured by US forces.

After the war, Oppeln-Bronikowski once again took up his interest in equestrian sports, coaching the Canadian team for the Tokyo Olympics. He died in retirement in 1966.

Generalmajor Otto Remer (Plate G3)

The character and abilities of this dedicated Nazi stand in contrast to those of previous entries, on officers of long experience who had seen battle in World War I. (Nazi beliefs did not in themselves preclude real military talent, of course – viz. Dietl, Model and Schörner.)

Born on 18 August 1912, Otto Ernst Remer joined the Army at the age of 20. He enjoyed a steady but unspectacular rise through the ranks over the next ten years, reaching the rank of Major by

ObstLt Otto Remer, posing shortly after the award of his Oakleaves in November 1943. The personal bravery of this officer of the 'Grossdeutschland' mechanized infantry was never in question; note the Close Combat Clasp among his many decorations. However, it would become clear that Remer's later promotion to senior command – due to his fanatical loyalty to the Nazis and the accident of his being in a position to help suppress the July 1944 coup attempt – outstripped his competence.

1942, when he rose to command the half-track battalion of the elite Grenadier Regiment 'Grossdeutschland'. At the head of I (gep.) Btl, Panzergrenadier Regiment 'GD', he showed considerable energy during the German counter-attacks which recaptured Kharkov in March 1943 and then pursued the retreating enemy as far as Belgorod. For his part in these actions Remer was decorated with the Knight's Cross on 18 May 1943. He continued to lead his battalion during the great armoured offensive at Kursk, and later at Krivoi Rog, its achievements bringing him the Oakleaves in November 1943.

Remer might well have been forgotten by history as just another brave and competent battalion commander; however, in March 1944 he was posted to take command of the elite Berlin guard detachment Wachregiment Berlin, which was a satellite unit of the 'GD' (and had been its original pre-war parent). On 20 July 1944, when ObstLt von Stauffenberg made the bomb attempt on Hitler's life at his Rastenburg headquarters, Remer was at first ordered by the plotters in the capital to arrest Propaganda Minister Goebbels and to secure the ministry

The Panzergrenadier battalion commander Maj Waldemar von Gazen, in regulation infantry officer's service dress and wearing his Knight's Cross with Oakleaves and Swords.

buildings. However, Goebbels enabled Remer to speak to the Führer by telephone; Hitler promoted Remer to Oberst on the spot, and ordered him to crush the mutiny. Remer acted immediately, and by the end of the day most of the conspirators were either dead or in custody.

Remer's reward was command of the elite Führer Begleit Brigade on the Eastern Front in August, and subsequent promotion to Generalmajor when the brigade was up-graded to a division within the so-called Panzerkorps 'Grossdeutschland' on 31 January 1945. Although the brigade fought well in the Ardennes, reaching St Vith on 21 December, the limitations of an officer promoted beyond his competence steadily became obvious. Throughout Remer's period of command the formation's casualties were heavy, and often blamed upon his incompetence.

Remer was fortunate enough to avoid Soviet captivity, and after the war entered politics, his extreme right wing beliefs unchanged. Although his party gained several seats in parliament it was subsequently banned, and Remer was forced to live in exile for a considerable time. After returning to Germany, in 1992 he was imprisoned for 22 months – when in his 80s – for making inflamatory speeches which amounted to Holocaust denial. Forced into exile once again, Remer died in Spain in 1997.

REGIMENTAL & BATTALION COMMANDERS

Oberst Waldemar von Gazen (Plate G1)

Born in Hamburg on 6 December 1917, Gazen joined the Wehrmacht as an officer candidate in 1936 and was commissioned Leutnant with Infanterie Regiment 66 in 1938. This unit evolved into Panzergrenadier Regiment 66, which served with 13. Panzer Division. During the attack on Rostov in June 1942, Gazen led his Grenadiers into the city, entering the northern sector where he seized and held an important bridge against enemy counter-attacks, thus ensuring a passage for the units following. For this action he was decorated with the Knight's Cross on 18 September.

The studious image of Heinz von Brese-Winiary concealed an extremely tough soldier, a holder of the Close Combat Clasp who was decorated for conspicuous personal gallantry. The Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross were awarded in April 1944; he had already been in almost unbroken combat service since the Polish campaign of 1939, and would fight on until the end.

In January 1943 Hauptmann von Gazen was in command of a small battlegroup during the fighting in the Caucasus. In a two-day battle of great intensity he and his men held off numerous enemy attacks and knocked out 22 Soviet tanks. On the following day, the enemy succeeded in breaking into the German lines, but were thrown back when Gazen led an immediate counter-attack. For these actions he was awarded the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross on 18 January 1943. Gazen was promoted Major the following month. Still serving with Panzergrenadier Regiment 66, Maj von Gazen was decorated with the Swords to his Knight's Cross on 3 October 1943. In August 1944 he was assigned to the General Staff, remaining in this post until the end of the war and reaching the rank of Oberst. Released from captivity in 1946, in civilian life he became a lawyer and notary.

Oberst Heinz Wittchow von Brese-Winiary (Plate G2)

Born on 13 January 1914 in Dresden, von Brese-Winiary joined the Army in April 1934, being commissioned Leutnant in 1936. In May 1939 he was promoted Oberleutnant and served as a battalion adjutant with Infanterie Regiment 10, seeing action during the campaign in Poland. He remained with the regiment during the campaign in the West, earning the Iron Cross 1st Class. For bravery during the first winter of the war on the Eastern Front he was decorated with the German Cross in Gold in December 1941, as one of the early recipients of this newly introduced decoration.

Promoted Hauptmann in March 1942, von Brese-Winiary commanded 6 Kompanie of his regiment. Throughout 1942 he saw continuous action on the southern sector of the Eastern Front during the drive to Stalingrad, being wounded in action several times. In April 1943 he was decorated with the Knight's Cross and promoted to Major. Von Brese had been tasked with defending a bridge over the River Don which was vital for the supply of the German forward units. Despite the fact that he had only a scratch group under his command, made up of stragglers of all types, the bridge was held. Subsequently he was given command of Panzergrenadier Regiment 108 with 14. Panzer Division, and fought with distinction in the Cherkassy Pocket, earning the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross on 6 April 1944, five days after his promotion to Oberstleutnant.

In September 1944 he was promoted Oberst and given command of the elite Panzer Fusilier Regiment 'Grossdeutschland' in succession to the wounded Obst Niemack, which he led until the unit finally surrendered to the Soviets in February 1945. He survived Soviet captivity, and died in retirement in Freiburg in 1991.

Oberstleutnant Josef Bremm (Plate H3)

Josef Bremm was born on 3 May 1914 at Mannebach. He joined the Army in 1935, and by the outbreak of war he was a Leutnant with Infanterie Regiment 425. Bremm saw service in the West during the invasion of France, where he earned the Iron Cross in both classes.

With the opening of Operation 'Barbarossa', Bremm served on the northern sector as a platoon commander with Infanterie Regiment 426, 126. Infanterie Division, and was wounded in action a few weeks after the start of the campaign. Given command of 5 Kompanie of his regiment in early August 1941, he was promoted to Oberleutnant in October. During the winter battles of 1941/42, Bremm led his company in repulsing a Soviet attack and then in a furious counter-attack which destroyed an enemy battalion. He was decorated with the Knight's Cross on 18 February 1942. Again wounded in action shortly afterwards, he was evacuated for treatment, and on his recovery was promoted Hauptmann and given command of II Btl of the regiment, still serving on the Leningrad front. In September 1942 Bremm's battalion succeeded in blocking a Soviet attack south-east of Lake Ilmen, which brought him the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross on 23 December 1942.

Josef Bremm, seen here as a Major, in a formal portrait taken after the award of his Oakleaves in December 1942 for gallantry and leadership at the head of an infantry battalion on the Leningrad front. Already this much-wounded officer looks rather older than his 28 years. On 9 May 1945, on the Western Front, ObstLt Bremm became the final German soldier of World War II to be awarded the Swords to the Knight's Cross.

In January 1943 Bremm was seriously wounded once again during operations to relieve the Demjansk Pocket, and was evacuated to Germany. He was posted to a training school as an infantry tactics instructor, and in February was promoted Major. This was only the briefest of rests, however; in March 1943, at his own request, he was reassigned to a combat unit, with command of a fusilier battalion in 712. Infanterie Division, a static formation then stationed on the Belgian/Dutch coast.

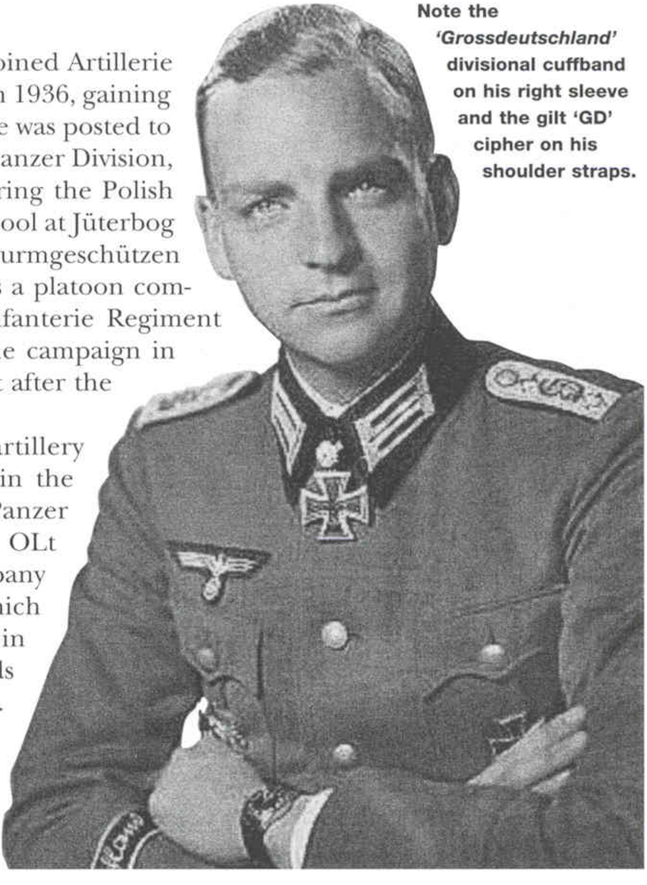
In 1944 Bremm saw heavy combat during the later fighting in Normandy, being given command of Infanterie Regiment 990, 277. Infanterie Division in August 1944. This partly Austrian formation had been sent into the line in mid-June to replace the battered 9. SS-Panzer Division 'Hohenstaufen'; it was heavily engaged against the British around Caen, and the disaster of the Falaise Pocket reduced it to about 1,000 combat troops and 1,500 others. On 1 November 1944, Maj Bremm was promoted to Oberstleutnant.

The 277. Division, rebuilt as a Volksgrenadier formation, saw action again during the Ardennes offensive; ObstLt Bremm was once more seriously wounded, but remained with his Grenadier Regiment 990 through the final retreat into Germany. Bremm would become the last soldier of the German Army to be decorated with the Swords to the Knight's Cross, on 9 May 1945. He survived the war, and died in retirement in 1998 at the age of 84.

Major Peter Frantz (Plate H2)

Born in Leipzig on 22 July 1917, Peter Frantz joined Artillerie Regiment 4 in Dresden as an officer candidate in 1936, gaining his commission two years later. As a Leutnant, he was posted to the artillery regiment of the largely Austrian 2. Panzer Division, and served in the regimental headquarters during the Polish campaign. Frantz then attended the artillery school at Jüterbog where the Army was forming its first battery of Sturmgeschützen (self-propelled assault guns), and was posted as a platoon commander when Batterie 640 was assigned to Infanterie Regiment 'Grossdeutschland' in time to participate in the campaign in the West. Promotion to Oberleutnant came just after the end of the campaign in France.

In June 1941 only the armoured and artillery elements of the 'GD' were initially deployed in the invasion of the USSR, operating with 7. Panzer Division, but the remainder soon followed. OLt Frantz was commanding the assault gun company (designated 16. Kompanie) of the regiment, which saw extremely bitter fighting around Tula in December 1941 during the last push towards Moscow, destroying 15 enemy tanks in one day. For this achievement Frantz was decorated with the Knight's Cross. By March 1942 he had been promoted to command one of the three batteries in what was now the Sturmgeschütz Abteilung 'Grossdeutschland'.



Hptm Peter Frantz, a highly decorated commander of armoured assault guns, in a posed studio portrait taken shortly after the award of the Oakleaves in April 1943. Note the *'Grossdeutschland'* divisional cuffband on his right sleeve and the gilt 'GD' cipher on his shoulder straps.

On 14 March 1943, resisting the major Soviet counter-offensive in the region of Kursk, Hptm Frantz (by now the Sturmgeschütz battalion commander in the Panzergrenadier Division 'GD') was leading a detachment of assault guns that destroyed 43 enemy T-34 tanks from a 60-strong force, even calling down artillery fire on their own position when their ammunition began to run low. Hitler personally decorated Frantz with the Oakleaves which he was awarded on 14 April.

Frantz served on with the 'GD' Division until January 1944, when he was assigned to the Kriegsakademie for general staff training. He was promoted Major in the General Staff (Major i.G) in August 1944. In the latter part of the war Frantz served on a corps headquarters staff on the Western Front; he was captured by US forces in May 1945.

Major Willy Jähde (Plate H1)

Willy Jähde was born at Helmsdorf on 18 January 1908. Joining the Reichswehr in 1927, he was assigned to a transport unit, and eventually gained his commission as a Leutnant in 1934.

By the outbreak of war he had been promoted Oberleutnant and was serving as a company commander in Panzer Abteilung 66 of 7. Panzer Division. Jähde served during both the Polish and French campaigns, earning the Iron Cross in both classes; he was promoted Hauptmann in 1940, before being transferred to the Unterführerschule at Putloss as an instructor.

He returned to combat duty in mid 1942 with Panzer Regiment 29, 12. Panzer Division on the Leningrad front, and the following summer he saw action during the Kursk offensive. In late October 1943, Hptm Jähde returned to the Leningrad front as commander of the Tiger tank battalion schwere Panzer Abteilung 502. For about six weeks from the beginning of November 1943 the unit was involved in furious defensive battles near Nevel, where it became encircled and was forced to fight its way out. More defensive battles around Voronovo followed, the massive Tigers being used as a mobile 'fire brigade' whose appearance on the battlefield often proved decisive. By late February 1944 the Abteilung had run up a score of over 500 enemy tanks destroyed. For this achievement Jähde was decorated with the Knight's Cross on 16 March 1944.

From May of that year until the closing stages of the war Jähde commanded the school for Panzer NCOs at Eisenach, returning briefly to combat duty when he took command of a small Kampfgruppe just before the end. He was captured by US forces but released within a couple of months, returning to civilian life. His home was now in the Soviet zone (DDR), from which Jähde and his family escaped in 1961. In retirement he lived at Tutzing.

Major Willy Jähde of sPzAbt 502 is seen here in a snapshot taken on the Leningrad front. This Tiger tank commander habitually wore a sheepskin jacket over his black Panzer uniform during the Russian winter.

THE PLATES

A1: Generalfeldmarschall Erich von Manstein; Sebastopol, July 1942

As commander of Army Group South during the siege of Sebastopol, von Manstein wears a field uniform with the general officers' field-grey *Feldmütze* of the M1938 'new style'. This cap bears the gold general officers' national eagle-and-swastika insignia, and gold piping on the crown seam, the front 'scallop' of the turn-up flap, and in an inverted 'V' around the national cockade. The all field-grey tunic (i.e. without dark green badge cloth facing to the collar) appears in a photograph to be of lightweight material; it is worn with plain grey breeches (without the regulation generals' scarlet *Lampassen* double stripes and seam piping), and officers' riding boots. The gold breast eagle, 'Alt Larisch' collar patches, and shoulder straps are those of all general officers, the latter distinguished by the silver crossed batons of field marshal. His decorations are the Knight's Cross (awarded 19 July 1940, as Gen der Inf commanding XXXVIII Corps in France), and the ribbon of his World War I Iron Cross 2nd Class with a crossed swords clasp. After the institution on 25 July of the Crimea battle shield, awarded to all ranks for operations on that front between 21 September 1941 and 4 July 1942 **(see detail, right),** von Manstein apparently displayed a gold version on his upper left sleeve. His brown officers' field belt supports a holstered Walther PPK semi-automatic pistol.

A2: Generalfeldmarschall Erwin Rommel; French coast, spring 1944

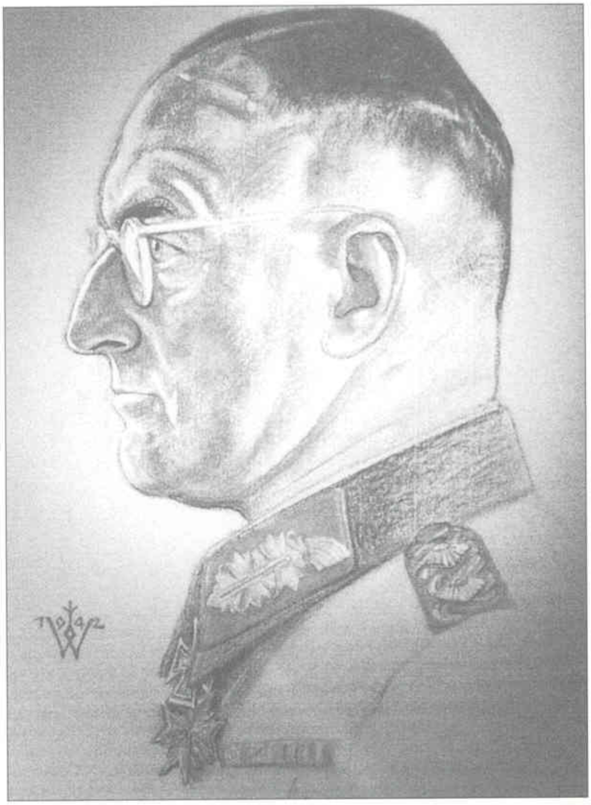
Inspecting the coastal defences as Oberbefehlshaber West, Rommel carries the field marshal's *Interimstab* baton. His *Schirmmütze* service cap has generals' gold piping and chin cords, but the silver national eagle and wreath which were regulation before 1 January 1943. His generals' field-grey greatcoat has dark green collar facing and scarlet lapel facing; the exposed dark green tunic collar bears scarlet generals' patches with abbreviated 'Alt Larisch' embroidery, with only two 'leaves' instead of three. Almost obscured here are field-grey breeches complete with scarlet *Lampassen*. His throat decorations are the Knight's Cross with Oakleaves, Swords and Diamonds (awarded, respectively, 26 March 1940, 20 March 1941, 20 January 1942 & 11 March 1943), above the *Pour le Mérite* awarded in December 1917 for bravery on the Italian front during the Caporetto campaign.

A3: Generalfeldmarschall Walter Model; Holland, September 1944

The commander of Heeresgruppe B during the Allied Operation 'Market Garden', Model wears his characteristic monocle, and a light cellophane British anti-gas 'eye protector' on his service cap, which bears the gold insignia ordered on 1 January 1943. His field-grey service tunic with green collar facing, and grey breeches with scarlet double stripes flanking scarlet seam piping, are conventional; the latter have light grey suede cavalry-style reinforcement on the inner leg. He wears regulation insignia for his rank on collar, breast and shoulder straps. At the throat he displays the Knight's Cross with Oakleaves, Swords and Diamonds (awarded, respectively, 9 July 1941, 17 February 1942, 2 April 1943 & 17 August 1944). He wears the buttonhole ribbon of the 1941/42 Eastern Winter Campaign medal; and on his left breast, his World War I Iron Cross 1st Class below the clasp of a World War II repeat award. In the same cluster are his Tank Battle Badge, and a Wound Badge in Gold signifying a total of five separate awards.

B1: General der Gebirgstruppe Ferdinand Schörner; Finland, spring 1943

As commander of Heeresgruppe Nord in northern Finland, April–May 1943, General of Mountain Troops Schörner wears a field uniform assembled to personal taste. The field-grey *Bergmütze* bears no indication of his rank apart from gold buttons; the Edelweiss badge worn by all ranks of the mountain troops **(see detail right)** is obscured here, but was worn on the left side of the flap, stem forward. His field-grey service tunic is an old M1928 model, with scarlet general officers' piping on the lower and front edges of the green-faced collar, down the front edge and round the cuffs. His insignia of rank are conventional; on his right upper sleeve he displays the mountain troops' Edelweiss patch. His throat decorations are the Knight's Cross (awarded 20 April 1941, as general commanding 6th Mountain Division), and the *Pour le Mérite*, which he was awarded – like Rommel – for bravery in the Caporetto fighting of autumn 1917. On his left breast pocket is the large Gold Party Badge, awarded to



Ferdinand Schörner's portrait, as executed by the famous war artist Wolfgang Willrich. Almost all the leading field commanders sat for such portraits by Willrich, which were then mass-produced in postcard form for sale to the public. Note that the rank shown on his shoulder straps is the two stars of a general. (Josef Charita)

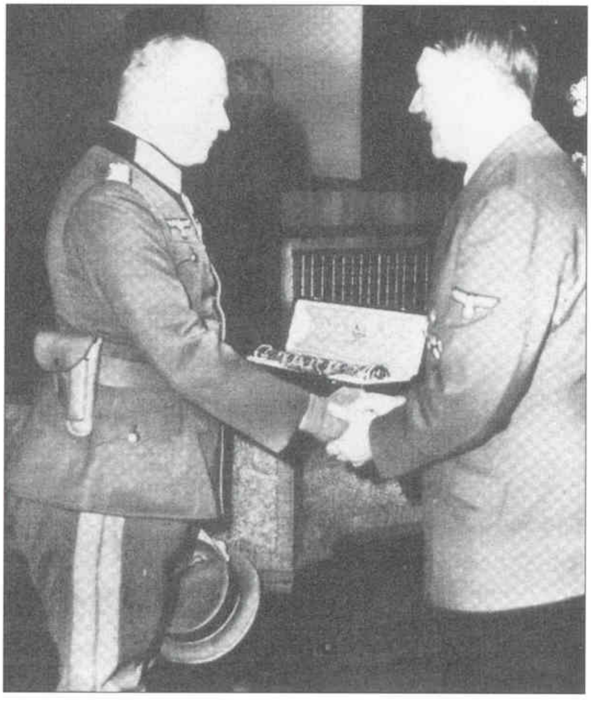
Nazi Party members with numbers below 100,000. Photos show the loose trousers of mountain troops, gathered at the ankle, in a paler shade than his tunic; they are worn with heavily cleated regulation mountain boots.

B2: Generalfeldmarschall Gerd von Rundstedt, autumn 1944

Von Rundstedt was often photographed in this uniform, which emphasized his background in the Imperial army and his pride in his appointment as honorary colonel *(Chef)* of Infanterie Regiment 18. It displays a combination of regimental and field marshal's rank features: the M1920 eight-button officers' service tunic has infantry-white frontal piping; the regimental officers' silver bars *(Litzen)* on infantry-white collar patches; and field marshal's shoulder straps on infantry-white underlay, bearing both the batons and the regimental number. The cap has pre-1943 insignia; the striped field-grey breeches, riding boots, grey kid gloves and *Interimstab* are all conventional. His decorations include both World War I and II awards of the Iron Cross 1st Class, and the Knight's Cross with Oakleaves (respectively, 30 September 1939 & 1 July 1944).

B3: Generalfeldmarschall Ewald von Kleist; Ukraine, spring 1943

The commander of Heeresgruppe Süd wears a pair of motoring goggles over the 1943 insignia on his service cap. His clothing is as regulations, apart from the fur collar added to his generals' greatcoat. His Knight's Cross and Oakleaves were awarded, respectively, on 15 May 1940 and 17 February 1942.



Ewald von Kleist receives his marshal's baton from Adolf Hitler at a special ceremony at the Führerhauptquartier following his elevation to Generalfeldmarschall in February 1943. Note that Kleist carries a sidearm (probably a Walther PPK) even in the Führer's presence; this would later be prohibited out of fear of assassination attempts. (US National Archives)

C1: Generalleutnant Hans Hube; Sicily, August 1943

The most obvious feature of the commander of XIV Panzerkorps is the odd-looking false left arm; this replaced the limb which he lost in 1914. The combination of the olive cotton tropical uniform with white shirt and black tie is unusual, but not unique in wartime photographs. The cap bears plain all-ranks' insignia but has generals' gold piping at the crown, front scallop and in an inverted 'V'. Tunic insignia and breeches are regulation; note the gold-on-black breast eagle of a General der Panzertruppe. Unusually, Gen Hube displays his 1914 and 1939 Iron Crosses 1st Class and his Tank Battle Badge, but not his Knight's Cross with Oakleaves and Swords (awarded, respectively, 1 August 1941, 16 January 1942 & 21 December 1942).

C2: Generaloberst Eduard Dietl; Soviet/Finnish border, June 1942

The commander of 20th Mountain Army, and Oberbefehlshaber Lapland, displays a dazzling array of insignia and awards on this uniform – basically the field-grey *Bergmütze* and M1935 'piped field service tunic' *(Feldblüse mit Vorstössen)*, and stone-grey generals' breeches worn with puttees and mountain boots. The cap is unpiped at this date and bears silver national insignia, with the Edelweiss

OPPOSITE **Gen Eduard Dietl, in a leather greatcoat of the type favoured by many senior officers, greets one of his soldiers decorated with the Knight's Cross, Uffz Helmut Valtiner, temporarily serving in the military police while recovering from wounds received during the action which earned him the award. Dietl's modest social background and friendly manner made him well liked by his troops and by the Finnish population alike. (Josef Charita)**

badge pinned to the left side. The insignia of rank on the shoulders and red-piped collar, and the gold breast eagle, are regulation. Dietl was awarded the Knight's Cross on 9 May 1940, and the first-ever award of the Oakleaves on 19 July 1940. The Edelweiss right sleeve patch is balanced by the Narvik battle shield on the left **(see detail, left)**. On his right breast pocket is the prestigious mountain guides' *(Bergführer)* qualification badge – an honorary award, as was the Luftwaffe's Pilot/Observer badge pinned to his left breast alongside his Wound Badge in Silver, and Iron Crosses 1st Class of both World Wars. A final presentation piece is the Navy's 'honour dagger' which Dietl received after the battle of Narvik, engraved with the names of the ten destroyers of the Narvik squadron.

C3: Generaloberst Heinz Guderian, c.1943–44

This figure is chosen to illustrate Gen Guderian wearing the black 'special uniform for armoured troops' with generals' distinctions – which is only rarely seen in photographs of the Inspector of Armoured Troops. He wears the service cap with pre-1943 insignia; his rank is otherwise indicated only by the gold breast eagle and the shoulder straps, since he follows regulations in wearing the all-ranks pink-piped death's-head collar patches of the Panzertruppe. Awards of both classes of Iron Cross in both World Wars are displayed – in the buttonhole (2nd Class), and on the left breast (1st Class), beside his Tank Battle Badge.

D1: General der Panzertruppe Ludwig Crüwell; Libya, May 1942

The temporary commander of Panzerarmee Afrika in Rommel's absence, Gen Crüwell was photographed in this uniform shortly after being captured by British forces. Just visible under the goggles is gold generals' piping on his tropical field cap. This, his tunic and shorts all show differing shades, as was common with the frequently washed tropical cotton clothing; they are worn with high, first-pattern laced tropical boots of canvas and leather. All insignia are conventional; note on his right sleeve the 'AFRIKAKORPS' formation cuff title introduced on 18 July 1941. At his throat are his Knight's Cross (4 May 1941) and Oakleaves (1 September 1941). Just visible above his belt buckle, a monocle hangs on a fine cord.

D2: General der Panzertruppe Hasso von Manteuffel; Ardennes, December 1944

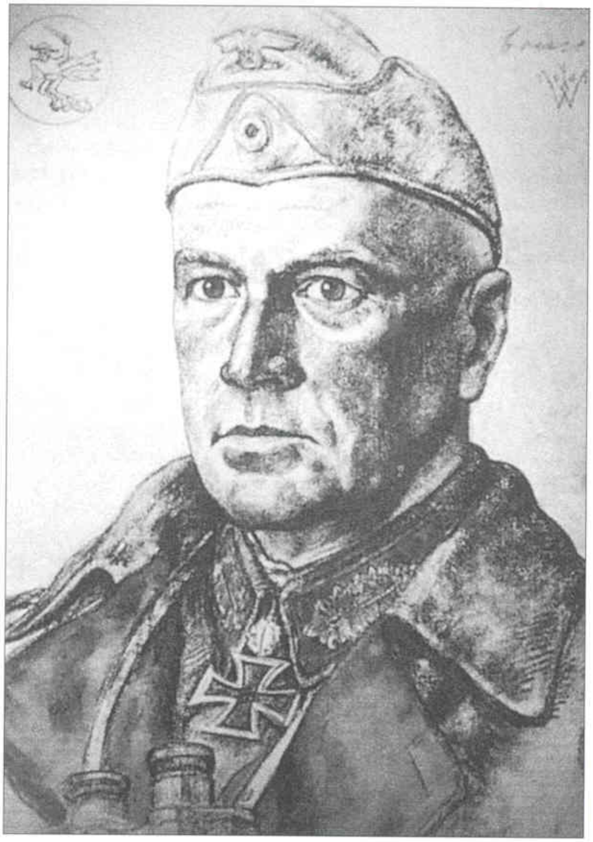
The commander of 5th Armoured Army wears the popular 'old style officers' field cap', with no cords, a soft leather peak, gold piping, but with non-regulation gilt metal wreathed cockade instead of the regulation flat-woven badge. The collar patches of rank are visible on a late war field-grey tunic collar. His shoulder straps (on which he sometimes displayed the 'Grossdeutschland' Division's 'GD' cipher) are attached to a privately purchased leather greatcoat, to the right forearm of which – very unusually – Gen von Manteuffel has added two cuff titles: the commemorative 'AFRIKA' band, prescribed by regulation for the other sleeve, above the 'Grossdeutschland' title of his former division. His Knight's Cross, Oakleaves and Swords were awarded respectively on 27 November 1941, 19 November 1943 & 22 February 1944.

D3: Generalmajor Julius Ringel; Crete, 1941

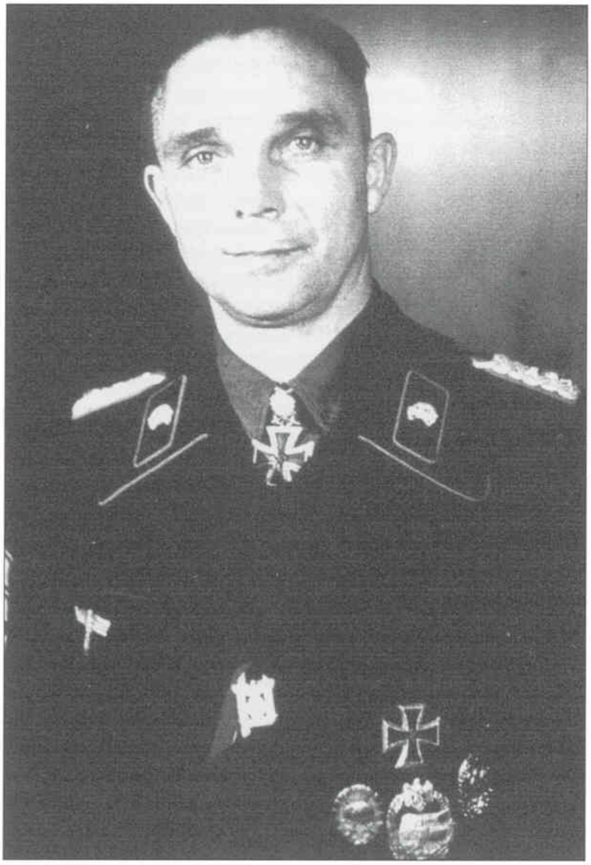
The commanding general of 5th Mountain Division, instantly recognizable by his beard, wears the M1930 field-grey *Bergmütze* with single-piece insignia (the eagle still silver) and the Edelweiss side badge. The tropical tunic (of a more faded olive shade than the breeches) is shown in different photographs with both closed collar and generals' collar patches, and with this plain open collar – perhaps the latter style dated from the award of the Knight's Cross on 13 June 1941? It bears rank shoulder straps, a pin-on gilt metal breast eagle, the Edelweiss right sleeve patch, the Iron Cross 1st and 2nd Classes, a Wound Badge, and a long ribbon bar displaying 'Papa' Ringel's Austro-Hungarian World War I and German awards.

E1: General der Panzertruppe Heinrich Eberbach; France, August 1944

The commander of 7th Army was one of the relatively few



Wolfgang Willrich's portrait study of Gen Ludwig Crüwell, executed in charcoal. Note at top left the insignia of the *Gespenster* or 'Ghost' Division (11. Panzer Division, which Crüwell had commanded); and a facsimile of his signature at top right, above Willrich's own runic logo. (Josef Charita)



A portrait study of Obst Franz Bäke wearing the Swords added to his Knight's Cross with Oakleaves on 21 February 1944. Of particular interest is the Tank Battle Badge worn under the Iron Cross 1st Class on his left breast. This is the special version awarded to those who had taken part in at least 100 separate tank battles; it is rarely seen in photographs. (Josef Charita)

Panzer generals who retained the black tank uniform after reaching senior rank. This seems to follow the original M1934 pattern, with a very broad collar piped all round in pink *Waffenfarbe*, bearing the regulation all-ranks patches. It is worn with the black version of the officers' M1938 'new style field cap' with an inverted 'V' of pink piping round the cockade. Generals' rank is indicated by his shoulder straps, gold eagles on cap and breast, and gold cap piping. His decorations are the buttonhole ribbons of the 1941/42 Eastern Winter Campaign medal and 1914 Iron Cross 2nd Class with 1939 clasp; the 1914 Iron Cross 1st Class with 1939 clasp; the Tank Battle Badge, and a Wound Badge in Silver. Eberbach's face shows evidence of the severe wound he suffered in 1915, after which his nose had to be partially reconstructed.

E2: Generalmajor Theodor Scherer; Cholm, early 1942

Another of the tiny handful of German senior officers who wore beards, Scherer wears against the cold of the Russian winter an example of the long, loose, reinforced M1934 watchcoat or surcoat *(Ubermantel),* with in this case sheepskin lining added to its broad collar, and shoulder straps of his rank. His 'old style' officers' field cap has gold piping and regulation flat-woven silver insignia. His issue ski boots are protected by canvas 'Styrian' gaiters. On 1 July 1942 a battle shield **(see detail, right)** was instituted for veterans of the Cholm Pocket.

E3: Generalleutnant Fritz Bayerlein; Normandy, June 1944

The commander of the Panzer Lehr Division wears the M1943 'universal field cap', which became increasingly popular among senior officers in the last two years of the war; this example lacks either generals' or even officers' piping, and only the pin-on gold eagle from a service cap betrays Bayerlein's status. His service dress is otherwise entirely conventional for his rank, though he displays the gilt 'L' cipher of his division on the shoulder straps **(see detail, Plate F)**. His Knight's Cross was awarded on 26 December 1941 when he was Rommel's chief-of-staff in North Africa; the Oakleaves, on 6 July 1943 for staff service in Italy.

F1: Generalmajor Dr Franz Bäke; Eastern Front, April 1945

The black tank uniform and M1943 cap are illustrated here with gold insignia and piping, although this officer could only have worn major-general's distinctions in the last two weeks of the war, when he was promoted to command Panzer Division 'Feldherrnhalle 2' (formerly 13. Panzer Division) on the Hungarian/Czechoslovakian/Austrian front. However, several photographs confirm his former uniform as the colonel commanding Panzer Brigade 106 'Feldherrnhalle', and he wears the silver-on-brown cuff band with that honour title. His most noticeable decorations – remarkable for such a senior officer – are the three right-sleeve badges each for single-handed destruction of a tank with hand-held weapons, which he won at Kursk. Apart from his Iron Crosses and 1941/42 Winter Campaign ribbon, he also displays the bi-metal Tank Battle Badge for 100 engagements, and a Wound Badge in Gold for five or more wounds. His Knight's Cross, Oakleaves and Swords were awarded on 11 January 1943, 1 August 1943, and 21 February 1944 respectively.

F2: Generalmajor Horst Niemack; Ruhr, March 1945

Another distinguished colonel who only attained general rank in the final weeks of the war, Niemack took over command of the Panzer Lehr Division from Gen Bayerlein on 5 February 1945, but only held the post until being wounded once again on 2 April. He is illustrated in completely conventional M1936 service dress, though with leather-reinforced cavalry breeches; the Pz Lehr Div officers' gilt 'L' cipher **(see detail, above)** is pinned to his shoulder straps. Surprisingly, he does not display a Wound Badge, only his Iron Cross 1st Class, and Knight's Cross with Oakleaves and Swords.

F3: Generalmajor Hermann von Oppeln-Bronikowski; Silesia, early 1945

The last commander of 20. Panzer Division, this aristocratic cavalryman wears black tank uniform with gold insignia and piping and the shoulder straps of the general rank he finally attained in January 1945. He displays the usual decorations and Battle Badge; note on his right breast the German Cross in Gold.

G1: Hauptmann Waldemar von Gazen; Caucasus, January 1943

Illustrated as a captain commanding a Kampfgruppe of PzGren Regt 66, 13. Pz Div, von Gazen wears the 'old style' officers' field cap; and a motorcyclist's rubberized fabric coat *(Kradschutzmantel)* with cloth-faced collar. Cap and shoulder straps of rank show the green *Waffenfarbe* piping and underlay of Panzergrenadiers. His Knight's Cross and Oakleaves show at his shirt collar.

G2: Oberst Heinz Wittchow von Brese-Winiary; Lithuania, September 1944

The newly promoted colonel commanding Panzer Fusilier Regiment 'Grossdeutschland' (in practice, simply this large division's second mechanized infantry regiment) is portrayed in full service dress, with decorations that represent almost a history of the German infantryman's war. He was awarded his Iron Cross 2nd Class in Poland, 1939; the 1st Class in France, 1940; the German Cross in Gold for the 1941/42 winter campaign in Russia; his Knight's Cross for leading a battlegroup in the aftermath of Stalingrad in spring 1943, and the Oakleaves for commanding a regiment in the Cherkassy Pocket in April 1944. In the meantime he had earned the Infantry Assault Badge (bronze, for mechanized troops); the Close Combat Clasp in Gold; and a Wound Badge in Gold – in all von Brese was wounded no fewer than nine times.

G3: Generalmajor Otto Remer; Eastern Front, spring 1945

Newly promoted to command the Führer Begliet Division (nominally expanded to that status from its true identity as a badly mauled brigade), this fanatical Nazi officer gives the Party salute – which compulsorily replaced the old military salute for all personnel after the 20 July 1944 coup which he helped suppress. Like Obst von Brese, his unit forms part of the 'Grossdeutschland' Corps, so he wears the 'GD' cipher on his shoulder straps; unlike von Brese, who was newly transferred to that corps, the long-serving Remer also wears its cuff title on his right sleeve. Remer's uniform and insignia are conventional. His decorations include the Knight's Cross, which he received in May 1943 when commanding the halftrack-equipped I Btl/ PzGren Regt 'GD' at Kharkov, and the Oakleaves, which followed that November for his command of the regiment. He also displays the Iron Cross, German Cross in Gold, General Assault Badge, Close Combat Clasp in Silver, and Wound Badge in Silver; and the ribbons of the Iron Cross 2nd Class, Winter 1941/42 and 4 Years' Service medals.

H1: Major Willy Jähde; Leningrad front, March 1944

The commander of the Tiger tank battalion sPz Abt 502 was photographed wearing this sheepskin jacket over his black tank uniform. The system of sleeve ranking, in green oak-leaves and bars printed on black, was introduced in February 1942 for all clothing that was not supposed to bear shoulder straps; in practice, it is not much seen in wartime photographs.

H2: Major Peter Frantz; Eastern Front, spring 1943

The commander of the 'Grossdeutschland' Division's Sturmgeschütz Abteilung is pictured during the rest period in the rear which followed his unit's distinguished fighting in early March, for which he was awarded the Oakleaves to his Knight's Cross. The field-grey 'special uniform' for assault gun crews is conventional, but note the divisional cuff band worn high on the right forearm. Frantz's shoulder straps have the usual artillery-red *Waffenfarbe* underlay and 'GD' ciphers **(see detail, right)**, and his collar *Litzen* have matching red 'lights' on the silver lace bars. Most unusually, the silver officers' piping on his M1938 'new style' field cap extends to the soutache of braid around the cockade.

Maj Willy Jähde, seen here in the distinctive black Panzer jacket, which was more usually worn with the lapels pressed open. This portrait study was taken not long after the award of his Knight's Cross in March 1944. (Josef Charita)

H3: Oberstleutnant Josef Bremm; Ruhr Pocket, spring 1945

This much wounded and highly decorated infantry officer is included for symbolic reasons: he was the last man to be awarded the Swords to the Knight's Cross, on 9 May 1945 – 24 hours after the European war ended. We reconstruct the commander of Gren Regt 990, 277. VolksGren Div as wearing a helmet without insignia; and a field-grey leather greatcoat, to which he has added his lieutenant-colonel's shoulder straps with infantry white underlay.

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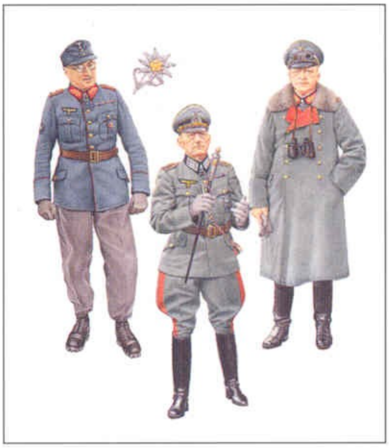

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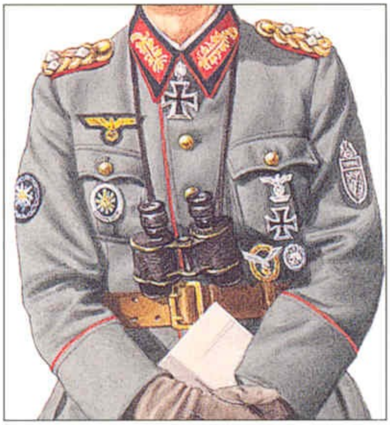

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